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Micah B.D.C. Naziri

Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

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Persistence of Jewish-Muslim Reconciliatory Activism in the Face of Threats and “Terrorism”

(Real and Perceived) From All Sides

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the PhD in Leadership and Change Program of Antioch University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in Leadership and Change, Graduate School of Leadership and Change, Antioch University.

Dissertation Committee

- Philomena Essed, PhD, Committee Chair
- Jon Wergin, PhD, Committee Member
- Anne de Jong, PhD, Committee Member

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Finally, I wish to thank my grandchildren in the next generation, and their families, as well as those future activists and revolutionaries who will carry the proverbial torch in decades and centuries to come, *in sha Allah, im yirtzeh Ha'Shem*. It is for them and the persistence of our intergenerational and intersectional struggle that this work is ultimately dedicated. It is my hope that you find this study and its results edifying and useful towards a victorious struggle.

Abstract

This dissertation concerns how Jewish-Muslim and Israel-Palestine grassroots activism can persist in the face of threats to the safety, freedom, lives, or even simply the income and employment of those engaged in acts of sustained resistance. At the heart of the study are the experiences of participants in the Hashlamah Project, an interreligious collaboration project involving Jews and Muslims. Across chapters and even nations, chapters of this organization faced similar threats and found universally applicable solutions emerging for confronting those threats and persisting in the face of them. This raised the question of whether revolutionaries and activists in general can persevere with such work in the face of this sort of menacing. The study found answers to this in determining what methods were most widely employed and which had the best results. The results of the study showed an array of widely employed methods for navigating threats in high-risk activism and persevering with such work in the face of these threats. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, <http://aura.antioch.edu/> and OhioLINK ETD Center, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>.

Keywords: Israel, Palestine, No State Solution, One-State Solution, Two-State Solution, Hashlamah Project, Fear, Threats, High-Risk Activism, Humiliation, Leadership, Minority Influence

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
The Nature of the Conflict: Israel and Palestine or Jewish and Muslim?.....	3
Approach.....	5
Activist Research	9
High-Risk Activism	10
What Is Terrorism in This Study?.....	16
Background of the Research: Social Justice Finds Religion?.....	17
How to Do Research or Research Methodology	21
My Positionality and Vantage Point for Successfully Conducting This Research	23
Epistemological Considerations	24
Limitations	28
Ethical Considerations	29
The Structure of the Dissertation	29
Chapter II: Framing the Research: Integrating Relevant Theory, Research, and Practice	32
Prelude: Religion as a Path Towards Reconciliation	32
Topical Categories of the Literature Review	33
Intellectual Leadership and a Historical-Critical Reassessment of Israeli Nationalist Claims ..	35
Two States or One?.....	44
Academic Distortions of the History and Modern Context of the Israel-Palestine Conflict	45
New Theoretical Ways to Think About Palestinian Self-Determination	48
Social Justice and Political Opposition to Israeli Ethno-Nationalism	50
Standing Against the Apartheid State	52
Resistance Within the Context and Borders of Israeli Occupation	54
Dialogue Groups	61
Relational Leadership.....	62
Grassroots Activism.....	67
Pedagogy of Dangerous Memories	77

Facing Fear	80
Conclusion to Chapter II.....	85
Chapter III: Methodology, Guiding Questions, and Research Procedures—A Study of Action Research.....	88
Reflections on a Pilot Study.....	89
Methods	97
Emphasis on Face-to-Face Interactions	101
Ethics and Positionality	103
Conflicts of Interest	105
Risks and Consent.....	107
Logistics of the Research.....	108
Interviewing Process.....	110
Goals of the Interviews and Analysis of the Data	113
Unforeseen Obstacles in Conducting the Interviews	114
Conducting the Interviews	118
Chapter IV: Findings of the Study	121
The Hashlamah Chapters, in Brief.....	123
Tel Aviv Chapter	123
Jerusalem Chapter.....	124
Yellow Springs Chapter.....	125
The Participants and Their Stories.....	130
Tel Aviv Participants	130
Jerusalem Participants	132
Yellow Springs Participants	135
What Were the Themes?.....	137
Coding the Interviews	138
Threats and Ramifications	140
Threats to Life and Safety.....	141
Physical Threats	142
Social Threats	147
Financial Threats	148
Psychological Threats and Internalized Oppression.....	148
No Threats to Life/Moderate Social Tension	148

Physical Threats (Not to Life)	149
Social Threats (Not to Life)	152
Financial Threats (Not to Life)	157
Psychological Threats (Not to Life).....	158
Navigation and Coping With Threats	159
Navigation and Coping With Threats: Personal/Psychological.....	163
Navigation and Coping With Threats: Renewed Focus	170
Navigation and Coping With Threats: Preparedness and Training	198
Summary of Findings.....	200
Chapter V: What the Data Mean and What the Implications Are	202
Existing Relevant Literature and Theories	203
The Hashlamah Project and Intellectual Leadership	205
Vulnerability and Empathy	206
History, Empathy, and Dignity: The “Battlefield of History”	208
Solidarity and Insulation as a Dominant Theme.....	213
Positionality Reflections	214
Bias-Checking and Tongue-Biting	214
Racialized Assumptions.....	218
Nonbinary Conflict	219
Moving Forward as Persistent Minority Influence and Ending Dominant Minority Rule	223
Concluding Questions Raised and Answered by the Research	236
Moving Forward	239
Where to Go From Here	240
Conclusion	243
References.....	245
Appendix.....	260
Appendix A: Recruitment Letter for Participants	261
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form.....	262

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Brief Description of Participants Including Abbreviations Used for Each.....	122
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List of Figures

Figure 4.1 Overview of Threats and Ramifications Described in Interviews.....	141
Figure 4.2 Overview of Navigating and Coping Mechanisms as Identified in Interviews.....	160

Chapter I: Introduction

This dissertation has directly grown from ongoing activism and action research I have been engaged in over the years. The primary research question asked in this dissertation is how Jewish-Muslim and Israel-Palestine grassroots activism can persist in the face of threats to the safety, freedom, and lives of those engaged in acts of sustained resistance. At the heart of the study are the experiences of participants in the Hashlamah Project, an interreligious collaboration project, involving Jews and Muslims. The project, established in the year 2012, is meant to contribute to social justice in Israel-Palestine, though it has chapters in different parts of the world focused on Jewish-Muslim reconciliation broadly (with discussion and debate surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflicts as a key element of that dialogue abroad). The principle of the project—which grew out of my journey as a doctoral student—is to bring Jews and Muslims into sustained conversation with the purpose of building trust and mutual understanding. Recently, this work has shifted to equal weight being applied in Western nations, especially the United States. This focus began to change in October of 2015 when large, organized, armed groups of self-described “patriots” and supporters of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump began assembling outside of mosques throughout the United States.

The Hashlamah Project immediately stepped up to rally counter-protests in response. Our first victory was in shutting down a “patriot” protest outside of a *Ja`fari, Ithna `Ashari* (or Shi`ism, as it is more commonly known in the West), Shi`ite mosque in Dearborn, Michigan—a protest which ironically justified itself by purporting to oppose *Sunni* Caliphatism. The irony in this was that Shi`ah of all varieties also oppose the historical Caliphate, or any future revival of the same. Immediately after shutting down this protest, we moved to confront a related

demonstration in Columbus, Ohio, on October 10th. The result of this was a viral video¹—spanning 45 minutes—recording a debate, involving myself, with the sole remaining anti-Muslim protester who eventually shared a hug with a Hashlamah Project member and accepted our invitation into the mosque for a tour, bagels, and coffee, as well as a lesson on Islam. This video received well over 10 million views (based on YouTube hits as well as viral article impressions) and provided Hashlamah Project members, myself included, opportunities to be interviewed for mainstream media from the *Today Show* to the *Washington Post* (as well as nearly every major media outlet). A small sample of this wide coverage includes AJ+ (2015), David and Hussein (2015), Holley (2015); Klausner (2015), Kuruvilla (2015), Murphy (2015), and Tan (2015). In Malaysia and Indonesia, this interaction aired on national headline news. Wide exposure brings moral and other support, but also makes us more vulnerable to verbal or physical violence from forces opposed to the work we do with the Hashlamah Project.

During this time of the Hashlamah Project, various issues around confronting external and internal resistance, including credible death threats, would arise. As a result, the focus of this dissertation shifted from the work of the Hashlamah Project itself to the issue of how an organization or activist can persist with their work in the face of far-reaching threats and even *fatawat* made against them and the organization they work with. This change emerged from my own experience of being exposed to a *fatwah* threat. What had seemed far away and characteristic to the Middle East—through Hashlamah members having talked about those experiences abroad—became very close and real to me as well in the US.

¹ The original video was published by Counter Current News, but many additional copies of it were made by news outlets via Community Commons licensing. AJ+ ran a video on it, with commentary and transcripts, which gained perhaps the most views of any source running the video.

In order to address the question of sustainability under trying circumstances, this dissertation begins with considerable background, into the Hashlamah Project itself, as well as some preliminary research related to it. While there is some related, but minor discussion of a pilot study that was underway before the *fatwah* against the Hashlamah Project was made, I organized my research by talking with people about how they persevere in the face of threats similar to what I faced. I inquired about what fears similar activist groups have, as well as how sustainable each organization or activist endeavor is with respect to these fears, and carried out an exploratory study, related to how Hashlamah activism can persevere in the face of threats—whether in the United States or abroad.

The dissertation rooted itself in the phenomenon of doing high-risk social justice work. This theme was addressed through the particular and narrowing lens which then homed in on the Middle Eastern, Israel-Palestine conflict(s). I looked at the overarching question: “how sustainable is social justice activism in the Israel-Palestine conflict(s), in the face of threats activists face?”

The Nature of the Conflict: Israel and Palestine or Jewish and Muslim?

From the outset, it should be made clear that all Hashlamah Project chapters are heavily entrenched in discussion, debate, and reconciliation surrounding the Israel and Palestine conflict(s), but this does *not* mean that all members of each chapter are themselves Israeli or Palestinian. Globally, many chapters happen to have diaspora Palestinian members. The Hashlamah Project, however, is not simply about Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, but dialogue on this issue is central to *all* Hashlamah Project chapters and has been since the inception of the organization.

In Israel proper, Palestinian members and participants are usually—but not always—Israeli citizens. The conflicts surrounding Israel and Palestine, however, have always been central topics of engagement for all work in each chapter. That is because in Jewish and Muslim communities this is naturally at the forefront of *any* in depth conversation about Jews and Muslims, that is held between Jews and Muslims in normal settings, in contrast with some orchestrated “coexistence-type” “interfaith” meetings, where difficult issues are simply taken off the table and swept under the rug.

Of the two Israeli chapters from which interviewees were drawn in this study, while there are members with clearly different backgrounds, all but one member is an Israeli citizen. This fact seemed to be of little ethnic significance to the Israel Arabs involved, as they see themselves as Palestinians and only Israeli on paper. While this is not a problem in terms of the research, it should be made clear from the beginning.

Meetings such as ours in the Palestinian Territories are an incredibly complicated matter that lies beyond the scope of this study and the consent agreements part and parcel to these interviews, to be described herein. For instance, while there are affiliates and associates within Gaza, there is no formal Hashlamah chapter, named as such, for a number of reasons. Instead, those associated with those involved in the Hashlamah Project there are affiliated with a related organization, the Jam`at al-Fitrah—as both were offshoots of an earlier iteration of our work. Even then, because of the political situation in Gaza, work within this esoteric circle is not openly discussed or advertised in the Palestinian territories the way that the Hashlamah Project is within Israel or abroad, and involvement is predicated on an intense referral and vetting process. As such, these chapters were intentionally excluded from the study at hand, and it is my hope

that they might instead be the focus of a future study, provided the concerns of participants can be met and their safety and anonymity can be effectively maintained.

Approach

The Hashlamah Project was established to bridge the gap between Jewish and Muslim communities—in the Levant and abroad. With my feet planted firmly in both worlds, I seemed to have a rare ability to mediate between open-minded Jews and Muslims. Time and time again, I found myself composing impromptu and informal “Hashlamah” sessions that we called “study circles”—at people’s homes, coffee shops, and bookstores. Eventually these solidified into formal study circle sessions, and finally chapters of the Hashlamah “Project” that sought to emulate these sessions in cities around the world.

In general, my approach to leading the study circles was democratic, where I shared the decision-making with participants. Group needs dictated my own skills, and knowledge borne from research and anthropological experience in both Jewish and Muslim spheres, as involving me as a guide of sorts, albeit in as anarchic and Taoist a manner as possible. In keeping with that approach to life in general (as well as leadership) that I prefer, I would advise by informing participants of historical and anthropological knowledge, afforded by my research and experience, and then I would again withdraw to let participants more or less lead themselves in a democratic manner.

This approach blended naturally with participatory action research as a methodology for my study of these study circles and issues we face in and through them. Participatory action research is grounded in real world needs and education for and within the community. It strives to overcome the ineffectiveness and elitism of conventional approaches to research, in a way that democratizes knowledge.

Participatory action research did not inspire me to think differently about leadership, as much as it defined the approach I was already taking.

My dissertation research was borne of my own experiences confronting threats of terrorism while engaged in this work: How can history—specifically religious history in this case—be used as nothing short of a weapon to fight back against what can only be characterized by the Islamic phrase “*Quat al-Jahl wa-l-Zhulum*” (the forces of Ignorance and Oppression)—whether from far right Israeli nationalists, armed anti-Muslim protesters on the American right, or the most backwards-thinking elements of “Islamicate” (as used by Hodgson, 1977) fundamentalism.

Participatory action research initially seemed to fit as the best methodology for the intentions that I set out with for this dissertation. There was simply no way that I could research in the contexts of the Hashlamah Project without unnaturally divorcing myself from the group, which I had been so centrally involved in, on several levels. Still, though my study began with a framework of participatory action research, it was eventually reframed as part of a much larger action research agenda, as I did not report results in an action research format. This study does not explicate a “problem” and then go on to describe how I and my participants set out to address the problem, and, then, conclude by showing how the data collected did that and how the problem now has been solved or reframed.

Instead, what this study did was to report on what participation in Hashlamah has been like for them and how they have dealt with it. The value in this study, thus, is not as pure participatory action research, but more as a phenomenological study with implications for future action. Furthermore, though the intention was to follow participatory action research in

collaborating continuously at every step of the process with those interviewed, various factors made that impossible.

Action research emerged in response to such factors as a growing frustration among practitioners and policy makers with the lack of relevance of traditional research findings and an increasing desire among many social scientists to conduct research that has greater social relevance. Research approaches from different social science traditions evolved independently in response to common frustrations with the inability of traditional positivistic social science methods to inform questions of practice or social action and in response to the emergence of post positivist epistemological paradigms.

Action research is perhaps the most widely used form of action-orientated research. Kurt Lewin (1946) is generally recognized as having introduced this model of search more than 70 years ago. His approach was social research wherein the researcher was trying to change the system while at the same time generating critical knowledge about it. Lewin argued that, for any field where action was a goal, the practitioners needed to attain two forms of knowledge: general laws about behavior or systems derived from basic research and specific information about the particular situation in which the action is desired. Drawing on methods and logic first used in the physical sciences, the action research approach subsumes notions of causality, objectivity and quantification with the goal of predicting and controlling human behavior (Prus, 1992).

In action research, there is essential value to the collaboration with nonresearcher participants. While the action researcher brings theoretical knowledge to the research experience and the skills of conducting social science research, participant collaborators bring practical knowledge and experience about the situations that are being studied. Both research and collaborators are then viewed as possessing expertise and knowledge that is critical to carrying

out the action research process. The participants in any given action are integrally involved in all of these activities. Lewin (1946) best summarizes action research when he describes it as consisting of analysis, fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, execution, more fact-finding evaluation, and then a repetition of this cycle of activities, as a spiral of circles (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 2002).

Historically, action research has been associated with private industry and organization development. This approach has been employed by scholars from an array of social sciences including education (Elliot, 1985), agriculture (Ortiz, 1991), and human development (Small, 1995). All forms of action research share a common agenda of producing research that can address practical concerns. Rapaport (1970) expanded that “Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework” (p. 4).

Action research seeks neither characterization nor causation (Checkland, 1985). Instead, the emphasis is on the creation of case studies of contexts and situations (Jahn et al., 1999). Each case study then serves as a basis for the next intervention, creating learning cycles. This approach includes stakeholders as collaborators and colleagues (Cox, Jahn, Mak, Chhorn, & Tuy, 1999). The very process of conducting the research with participants in the Hashlamah Project tends to ensure the relevance of research results to the challenges they face.

A unique aspect of action research is that both the research focus and the methodology may change as the inquiry proceeds—as was the case of the study at hand. As the research process unfolds, the research problem may evolve, requiring a new definition of the situation as well as new methods for understanding it.

This study began with a pilot study and was borne out of it—under the guidance of my mentor Ashley Lackovich-van Gorp—interviewing and observing Hashlamah Project members in the State of Israel specifically. But my initial focus, the use of historical texts as a way to create understanding and trust between groups commonly perceived to be historical enemies, by demonstrating precedence for peace, eventually took a backseat to the issue of how challenging it was for members to overcome and live with fear and threats. Initially, I could cognitively understand what the fear was about but not emotionally. All of that changed when I was exposed to threats as well, ironically, immediately upon return to the United States in 2014. This confronted me with the very basic question of what threats against our activist work meant for my leadership responsibility in relation to the Hashlamah project I had founded, and thereby motivated me to shift focus on this very question as central to my dissertation.

Activist Research

Action research is an umbrella term that includes participatory research, critical action research, new critical collaborative ethnography, action science, reflective practitioner action, action learning, industrial action research, classroom action research, soft systems approaches, collaborative inquiry, living theory approach, community-based participatory research critical participatory action research. In the end, this study turned out to be more of activist research than anything else. Like participatory action research, other—in some cases very new—similar approaches to PAR under action research are: Workers’ survey/co-research; action-research; popular education; institutional socioanalysis; participatory rural appraisal; participatory/socio-praxis methodologies; activist research/militant research; guerrilla/open source/participatory urbanism.

Activist research is “for” relatively powerless groups, and often involves close ties and cooperation with these groups. In contrast, traditional academic research involves close ties with colleagues and requires an emotional detachment from those people or issues being studied.

Maori scholar and activist Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argued that traditional research methods are complicit with the perpetuation of European colonialism. These methods can be thought of as “extractive” (Pain & Francis, 2003, p. 48) in that information is extracted from that which or those who are studied and knowledge is constructed, treating the community as “data plantations” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004) .

In many activist and social movement contexts, research is a central and essential activity though this is often not recognizable to outsiders, which includes most social movement scholars who do not typically realize that this is what they are. Addressing critical anthropologists, Speed (2006) wrote that in activist research, tensions exist “between political—ethical commitment and critical analysis . . . [yet] the benefit of explicitly activist research is precisely that it draws a focus on those tensions and maintains them as central to the work” (p. 74). Critically engaged sociologists have advised that activists actively analyze and theorize in their general activism itself. Kinsman (2006) has suggested that research and theorizing is a part of the normal everyday life of social movements, saying that activists,

are thinking, talking about, researching and theorizing about what is going on, what they are going to do next and how to analyze the situations they face, whether in relation to attending a demonstration, a meeting, a confrontation with institutional forces or planning the next action or campaign. (p. 134)

High-Risk Activism

If solutions in the real world are to be tangibly implemented, then confronting and overcoming fears of the real-world threats facing those doing the implementing is of paramount importance. Many people organizing for social justice take high risks in doing so. Depending on

the kind of activism, different risks can be involved including threats. In the following section I review some of the risks and consequences of high-risk activism.

The intention behind this section is to make a better assessment of the kind of risk, threat, and survival others have written about that can provide a context for my research on how the Hashlamah Project can sustain itself. At this point I am not intending to be inclusive, but to discuss just a handful of examples of the meaning of risk and its consequences. Even when I discuss studies from other activism contexts than the Israel/Palestine case, they can help better understand the kind of conversations that might be needed with participants in the Hashlamah Project. Cornerstone to the concerns driving the thesis question is, ultimately, how as activists we and movements are to achieve our objectives. Perseverance in the face of fear is the problem being addressed, but the reason behind this is that we want our movements to succeed.

By risk I mean “the anticipated dangers—whether legal, social, physical, financial and the like—of engaging in a particular type of movement activity,” as explained by Wiltfang and McAdam (1991, p. 987). Their study offers “an approach to studying activism using the concepts of cost and risk to capture some of the diversity of social movement activism” (p. 987). Cost, to the authors, is “anything given up, forgone, spent, lost or ‘negatively’ experienced [e.g., being arrested, paying a fine, being beaten, tortured, or killed]” (p. 989). Costs, they explained, “are under the individual activist’s control; risks, as future costs, depend not only on the activist’s own actions, but on others’ ‘response’ to their actions and activism” (p. 989). Similarly, this article distinguished between high and low risks of activism.

Carrying on that theme, McAdam (1986) proposed and argued for the importance of a distinction between “low- [and] high-risk/cost activism” (p. 64) and outlined a model of

recruitment to the latter. He emphasizes the importance of both structural and individual motivational factors in high-risk and high-cost activism. He contended that

an intense ideological identification with the values of the movement disposes the individual toward participation, while a prior history of activism and integration into supportive networks acts as the structural “pull” encouraging the individual to make good on his or her strongly held beliefs. (p. 64)

McAdam (1986) studied a single instance of high-risk and high-cost activism—the 1964 Freedom Summer project in the Southern United States. Participants were assessed for their participation, their drop-out rates—distinguished primarily on the basis of their greater number of organizational affiliations—higher levels of prior civil rights activity, and stronger and more extensive ties to other participants. The study has direct relevance to the Hashlamah Project, which is itself high-risk activism. It is not activism formed as a response to a threat, but activism which carries with it risk and threats of harm. The relevance and value of McAdam’s study is that it opens for discussion whether or not members of the Hashlamah Project feel their activism is risky and what it is they feel they are risking, as well as why they are persisting in the face of those threats.

Similar to this, Einwohner’s (2006) study, “Identity Work and Collective Action in a Repressive Context: Jewish Resistance on the ‘Aryan Side’ of the Warsaw Ghetto,” confronted one of the highest risk contexts of activism and resistance in modern history. Some readers, she explained, “might be surprised or even offended by my use of a case of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust to further scholarly understanding of social movements and collective action” (p. 39). Although her analysis “does not explicitly compare the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with other cases of collective action” (p. 39), she explained, she did “use it to draw implications for social movement research” (p. 39). Therefore, she “implicitly argue[d] that collective resistance during the Holocaust may be meaningfully compared to collective resistance in other contexts”

(p. 39). Protesters, she noted, often “make strategic decisions about how to present themselves to best advantage in the political arena in order to achieve their goals” (p. 38). Einwohner addressed the strategic role of identity and how it is embraced in social movements by examining the collective Jewish resistance in Nazi-occupied Warsaw, culminating in the two major battles of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943.

While this case might not be what usually comes to mind when one thinks of identity politics, there is no question that issues of identity were central to Warsaw Jews’ struggle. Jews in Warsaw were persecuted because of their Jewish identity, with extreme risks and costs associated with the display of that identity in any way in this setting. As is well known, under the Nazi regime, all individuals who were identified as Jewish were at risk for great personal harm. This was true regardless of whether they were activists or not, but for those who did resist, the risk was even greater. In spite of that, this paper highlighted how the key element of identity focused the persistence in the face of threats, even when making that identity known in any way was itself the highest of risks in that context.

Specifically, Einwohner (2006) looked at Jewish revolutionaries in Warsaw who were not of stereotypical, Nazi-defined “Jewish features,” languages or mannerisms. As such, they were those who were able to pass as non-Jews and yet used that ability towards resistance efforts, when they could in fact have used it simply to survive or perhaps escape the region.

The relevance of Einwohner’s (2006) study to the Hashlamah Project can be found in the dual privilege and risk that Jewish identity carries with it in confronting the oppressions of the Israeli State. Jews within Israel and those in communities abroad can criticize the actions of the Israeli State in a way that demands attention—a way which is very different than when

Palestinians or Muslims in general confront these issues. This can also trigger unique threats from within Jewish communities, by right wing elements.

Another study relevant to my research is White's (2010) examination of post-recruitment activism in the Irish Republican Movement. White looked at reasons for drop out in movements and surmised that the bulk of the reasons lie in personal decisions, challenges and threats, rather than a change in beliefs, politics or alignment. The work drew on data from members of Provisional Sinn Féin who were initially interviewed in the mid-1980s and later re-interviewed in the mid-1990s into the late 2000s. The author looked at those who were still involved after decades since their initial interviews. Some respondents stayed, others left entirely, while others helped create rival organizations—Republican Sinn Féin in 1986 and another rival organization, the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, in 1997. Most telling was that the interviews showed that the decision to exit from activism was primarily motivated by changes in the respondents' personal lives and not for political reasons whatsoever.

Nepstad and Smith (1999), looking at recruitment to high-risk/cost activism in Nicaragua reported findings “on differing levels of movement involvement by focusing on participation in a high-risk/cost campaign mobilized by Nicaragua Exchange, a solidarity organization in the United States-Central America peace movement of the 1980s” (p. 25). Their data confirmed the importance of relational ties in high-risk activism, and additionally raise questions about “the relevance of biographical availability and the unique functions of organizational ties” (p. 25). Nepstad and Smith argued that human agency and individual abilities to negotiate and overcome barriers to activism are key to understanding the endurance of activists in any particular high-risk movement. In this case, “foreign solidarity volunteers in Nicaragua were periodically kidnapped and killed by Contra forces. Thus, Nicaragua Exchange applicants had every reason to believe

that the activism upon which they were embarking involved both high-risks and substantial costs” (p. 40). Instead of just looking at the participation in activism, education, relationships with others in activist groups, or organizational ties to activism, this study also looked at “preparedness” for the threats one could face.

Some of the ways in which we can be prepared for threats might be different from traditionally expected. For instance, Cammaerts (2015) provided an overview of the ways in which social media and digital networks are contextualized and examined in relation to social movements and activism. Cammaerts looked at a number of communicative practices that activists deploy, and the ways “information and communication technology (ICT)-mediated practices are embedded in roles and functions relevant to activists and social movements are addressed giving attention to the importance of social ties and networks online and offline” (p. 1027). This communication is a way of dealing with safety and threats and serves as an example component of solutions going forward with the Hashlamah Project. Cammaerts defined ICT-supported communicative practices as organizing internally, recruiting and networking, mobilizing for and coordinating direct action, disseminating movement frames independently of the mainstream, and discussing as well as debating, deliberating and decision-making. Similarly, ICT-based communicative practices involve attacking ideological enemies, “surveilling the surveillers” (Cammaerts, 2015, p. 1031) and preserving protest artefacts. Cammaerts noted that in recent years,

a number of other roles that are related more to Internet-based practices than to Internet-supported practices . . . [that is,] they are more constitutive than instrumental, have forcefully asserted themselves. The network is used against the network; indeed, activists are using the Internet and social media platforms as weapons to strike at their ideological enemies. ICTs are therefore being used as instruments of direct action as “hacktivist” tactics demonstrate. (p. 1032)

This approach of surveilling the surveillers is a tactic of *sousveillance*, or bottom-up surveillance by activists on the state, public figures, or anyone who is attempting to cause them problems. This is a most meaningful study in terms of relevance for the Hashlamah Project and the issues of perseverance in the face of an array of threats that we face due to our activism.

What Is Terrorism in This Study?

Terms like *terrorism*, *assassination*, and *execution* can seem, and often are, loaded due to common hyperbolic use in media and politics. Here, by assassination I first refer to such examples as the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin, but also the concerns of activists with respect to the targeting of such activists as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X—both commonly characterized as assassinations. Further, this term was used across chapters, by a number of interviewees, and as such—though perhaps charged—I relay it as an accurate record of their concerns.

As for terrorism, which has a significantly more polemic tone in much political discourse, in this study I refer to such things as the praising of Baruch Goldstein in Hebron by settlers on the Jewish holiday of *Purim*, as a terrorist act. This is because it was not a simple act of expressing support for a terrorist, but it was broadcasting this praise, on a holiday, which imbued it with significance. While the term terrorism is loaded within the context of political or media discussion of Islam in general or even Palestine specifically, in far Left activist circles in the West, it is not at all uncommon to refer to actions of the United States or Israeli government or military as terroristic in nature.

The confusion that could occur for readers of this study lies in the fact that the common Western usage of the term terrorism seems to mean any act of violence or sabotage by parties not endorsed by the status quo, against agents of that status quo. The State typically shies away from

applying the term terrorism to its own military and police actions, in contrast to how Leftist activist circles use the term against the State. Instead, the general population typically thinks of terrorism as an illegal tactic used by nonstate groups or radicalized lone wolves. *The Oxford Dictionary* defines terrorism as the “use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims” (Terrorism, n.d.). To that end, the aforementioned act of the settlers is clear terrorism, as are many government sanctioned acts of violence against civilian populations, whether the Israeli, United States, or any other government.

Since 1994, the United Nations General Assembly has used the following political description of terrorism: “Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes.” (United Nations, 1994, para. 3). It is this definition which this study is employing in its use of the term terrorism.

Background of the Research: Social Justice Finds Religion?

The Hashlamah Project aims to draw Jews and Muslims together in co-worship, together, under one roof. It then seeks to use this as a pivot to add a momentum to peace that cannot be impeded by even by the most rhetorical political venom currently holding sway over the minds, hearts and even the very lives of innocents on both sides of the inorganic divide.

The role of religion in initiating and exacerbating intergroup conflicts has been studied extensively (e.g., Fox, 1999, 2001). Such research has viewed and presented religion primarily as a destructive factor in intergroup relations. The Hashlamah Project, concurs that, based on the evidence, religion can indeed be a vehicle for destruction of, and both personal or national quests for, power and dominance. Yet, conversely, it can serve as a basis for bringing people together (Abu-Nimer, 2001). This latter function might even be the reason for religion’s evolutionary success and universal existence.

More specifically, the position this study takes is that religion is as old as humankind, if not inherently part of human socio-evolutionary roots. The underlying assumption of the Hashlamah Project is that sustainable peace and social justice simply cannot be achieved without including the role of religion and utilizing religion to neutralize prejudice and even racism that hides behind the mask of religion. Yes, religion, like any other human institution, or facet of culture, can and will be exploited and hijacked by those seeking power. The same is certainly true of all human endeavors and even the institution of civilization itself. But irrespective of its ability to be wielded as a weapon, religion emerged to fulfill integral human needs which has made it socio-evolutionarily successful for at least the past 25,000 or so years,² when our ancestors began ritually burying their dead with shamanistic herbs, and painting depictions of what they saw as a spiritual world, on the walls of caves from South Africa to France.³ This is essential to bear in mind, particularly because the research in this study showcases both the best and worst of religion.

Ultimately seeing this conflict as either the result of religion itself or completely secular and politically nationalistic in nature will cause us to miss the point. Academically, this position is far from common, but anecdotally, this is often the position one encounters on the ground. Although to some, it may seem that the Jewish-Muslim conflict is secular, political, and being fought mainly over territory, it is also deeply rooted in a struggle between ideologies and has religious, cultural, and emotional aspects (Bar-Tal, 2007). Religion is embedded in all aspects of the conflict—it appears in the struggle over control and ownership of the holy places, and in the

² The idea that religion is an inherent part of human societies, and pre-history is first noted in James George Frazer's (1890/1993) seminal *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, which is concerned with the socio-religious emergence and evolution of belief.

³ A good reference on the purpose, function of and inspiration for the cave paintings specifically is Whitley's (2009) *Cave Paintings and the Human Spirit: The Origin of Creativity and Belief*.

religious reasons given for going to war or for seeking peace (see Kelman, 1999). When Netanyahu described Iran by saying “think Amelek”—referring to the Amalekites, described in the biblical book of Deuteronomy as mortal enemies of Jews⁴—he is invoking religiously-sanctioned mass murder. The roots of the conflict itself are religious. When looking at the catalyst for the Jerusalem Riots of 1920 being the use of chairs at the *Kotel*—“Wailing Wall”—or in the primary religious orientation of early Zionism to the Levant rather than geographical alternatives, such as Argentina and Uganda, as initially offered by Theodore Herzl, it is clear that religion permeates the conflict on every level, even when many of those in conflict view it through secular lenses.

The very nature of the conflict impedes the development of transcendent identities of the two parties, as it stresses a negative interdependence whereby asserting one group’s identity requires negating the identity of the other, in a cultural zero-sum game. While Israeli educational authorities seem somewhat aware of the problems inherent in the conflict, having therefore allocated educational and budgetary resources to develop intervention programs designed to mitigate the negative aspects of the conflict within the school system (Winer, Bar-On, Weiner, & Weiner, 1992)—more than 200 different programs designed for dealing with the conflict in Israel (both for adults and for school students) have been implemented in recent years, they rarely fulfill their promise and do not result in positive, lasting change (e.g., Yablon, 2007).

Meeting places that promote dialogue between the groups and provide opportunities for positive intergroup experiences are among the most popular methods used for enhancing peace, tolerance, and understanding between conflict groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Indeed, there

⁴ “Remember what Amalek did unto you . . . when you came forth out of Egypt. How he met you by the way and those who straggled behind . . . Therefore, it shall be . . . that you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” (Deuteronomy 25: 17–19).

are elements on both sides, forces who would not like to see reconciliation projects succeed, who would feel motivated to undermine the Hashlamah Project. The Hashlamah Project draws from the understanding that dialogue can be a fruitful tool for creating peace. Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis and Muzafer Sherif's groundbreaking Robber's Cave study (Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961) both serve as a reference point for the implementation of contact intervention programs; they here act also as both reference points and corroboration of the approach being taken by the Hashlamah Project Study Circles and the vehicle for carrying out the research described here. It should be noted, however, that there were follow up studies in the 1980s and later critical of the contact hypothesis (e.g., Pettigrew, 1986). While there are things that we can learn from these early studies, a major problem is in the frame of interpretation that is used to interpret the other in contact situations.

Bearing that criticism in mind, the Hashlamah project is the trigger, but the research focus in this dissertation is about sustainability in situations of fear and threat. In building a theoretical frame for this study in Chapter II, I focus both on issues related to Israel and Palestine and discuss studies about fear and hope—studies about conflict resolution, about what motivates activists to persist in spite of danger.

To summarize, my primary research question for this dissertation asks how Jewish-Muslim and Israel-Palestine grassroots activism can persist in the face of threats to the safety, freedom, and lives of those engaged in acts of sustained resistance. In order to address the question of sustainability under trying circumstances, I organize my research by talking with people about how they persevere in the face of threats directly aimed at them. I inquire about what fears activists experience, how they feel about this, what opportunities they think are ways

of dealing with those fears as well as how sustainable each organization or activist endeavor is with respect to these fears.

How to Do Research or Research Methodology

I was initially inspired by participatory action research, a method I have used in a 2014 pilot project about fear and change in relation to the Hashlamah Project chapters in Israel. For the purposes of this dissertation, I sought a good method for researching how to preserve activism in the context of fear and threats, whether the initial threats I personally faced within Jewish and Muslim circles as a result of my work with the Hashlamah Project, or more recently, threats from within the United States by armed, anti-Muslim protesters^s who have issued literally hundreds of death threats to us since October 2015. How do we persevere with revolutionary activism in the face of persistent threats to our safety, freedom, or lives?

True participatory action research is essentially positioned on the farthest end of the action research continuum and is characterized by work that pushes boundaries. In participatory action research stakeholders are engaged in all aspects of the research, including problem definition, planning, collecting and making meaning of data, as well as determining next action steps. As noted, in action research, members of the community are equals in the research process with those conducting the study. Everyone is regarded as a researcher and learner. This, in summary, defines my positionality and relationship with members of the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem chapters of the Hashlamah Project in particular. Methodological discussion is crucial for this dissertation, as this allows us to focus on the action of doing participatory action research, in the context of personal activism, which triggered concerns about leading change under situations of threat.

^s Among these have been the followers of Jon Ritzheimer, a well-known anti-Muslim activist who has been monitored by the FBI, and involved with the Bundy Ranch standoffs, as well as being heavily focused on by members of the prominent Neo-Nazi forum “Storm Front.”

The Israel-Palestine conflict has historically evolved, and still exists today, under circumstances of war, violence, threats, and real fear for safety, freedom, and individual lives. This is the focus on the first part of Chapter II which will discuss a range of theories and forms of activism developed regardless of the risk of exposure to hate and violence in response. Because of the “activist” nature of the methodology, Chapter II provides a blend of theory, findings and grassroots activist models of change.

Early on, this dissertation considers theories and models of leadership that have proven effective at producing true and lasting change, in Chapter II, where the theoretical frame of this dissertation is discussed in detail. These models, methodologies and approaches are more complex, networked, grassroots in nature and organic.

My purpose in looking at these theories and absorbing their strengths that are useful and applicable for our purposes must then be to engage in critical reflection on these theories, concepts, and themes drawn from the scholarly literature on leadership and grassroots change, analyzing and synthesizing them. Concurrently, and through this, I seek to provide deeper insight and understanding of the historical, social, cultural, and political contexts from which these approaches to change in relation to Israel and Palestine emerge. The focus in Chapter II narrows to specific theories and their strengths, which can be conducive to the application of these approaches to grassroots reconciliation and peace building between progressive, peace-minded Jews and Muslims. We are thus left with the question of what will make the Hashlamah Project sustainable and also what is the role of leadership, and what kind of leadership is required to make this high-risk activist work sustainable?

My Positionality and Vantage Point for Successfully Conducting This Research

Scholars differ on the central characteristics that define action research, yet it is widely agreed that action research focuses on real problems in social systems and seeks to provide assistance to identified stakeholders. Identifying stakeholders, in this case, was a somewhat simple endeavor. They were, and are, members of Hashlamah Project Study Circles—almost exclusively, in this study, practicing Jews and Muslims (and Druze) in the disputed region of Israel-Palestine. Demographically there is some variance, as the level of religious participation is not static between chapters.

Positionality is important in all action research. My experience and position influence my perspective and role in this research. Positionality is my own position in relation to the study. That position may influence aspects of the study, such as the types of information collected, or even how it is interpreted. J. Robertson (2002), who is critical of positionality for using generic, “ready to wear,” fixed categories and products of identity politics, spoke to the importance of delineating positionality:

Family history, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and religion, among other distinctions, can be usefully woven into an ethnographic narrative, but only if they are not left self-evident as essentialized qualities that are magically synonymous with self-consciousness, or, for that matter, with intellectual engagement and theoretical rigour. Their usefulness must be articulated and demonstrated because such distinctions are not fixed points but emerge and shift in the contiguous processes of doing and writing about fieldwork. (p. 790)

In other words, positionality is useful insofar as one’s position is reflected upon, with respect to how it might influence research and fieldwork. My own positionality, relative to the Hashlamah Project, arises from having been incapable of remaining silent in the face of injustice, or even conflict. Speaking against injustice has been part of my identity throughout my life. It is my disposition to seek a mediating role when conflict emerges. In relation to my own life, activism and even academic pursuits, this sort of diplomacy has proven both essential, and, yet, an

evolving work-in-progress. Sometimes things are a matter of perspective, relative, and we should try to look at them from the vantage point of the perceived other.

As the Proverbs in the Bible teach, “Every man is right in his own eyes” (21.2),⁶ and, thus, it is worth realizing that even points of view that are seemingly quite at odds with one another have some kernel of truth within them, which convinced the individual, initially, of that position. It may be that this truth is covered in lies, but it is our role in Jewish mysticism to “raise the sparks” of holiness within these husk-like coverings (*q’lippot*), which bury the truth in lies, and hid fragments of light within the darkness of ignorance. This Kabbalistic understanding is fundamental to my perspective on Judaism, and even more broadly to what I consider corresponding and concurrent personal practices and immersion in Sufi orders (*turuq*) and my Taoist lineage. The importance of Jewish mysticism, Sufism (*Tasawwuf*) and Taoism are all aspects of me as a person and consequently to this research as the common way in which these paths perceive the world, and others, and work to make the world a better place; this is key to my motivation for social justice. In Arabic, the phrase that explains this is *wahdat al-wujud*, the unity of existence itself, and by extension the realization that what affects one affects all.

Epistemological Considerations

To explain the relevance of participatory action research for this dissertation, I here outline how sustainability is a goal for all participants involved including myself as a stakeholder. My being a stakeholder and a researcher who also needs to be able to take some distance, was one of the reasons to not restrict those participating in the research project to representatives of the immediate Hashlamah Project chapter I work with. My purpose was to draw from the experiences

⁶ In Semitic languages the default pronoun was in Biblical times, and is today, masculine. While an inherently male-centered bias of numerous languages, its use does not indicate gender specificity when used broadly, whether in the Bible or Qur’an.

of a more diverse group, particularly those in the Levant, and to personally apply finding to my own activism as well. This is a case of balancing participatory action research as a methodology with real life activist purposes that I have as a human being. Barghouti, Sivan, and de Jong (2015) suggested that participatory action research can erase boundaries between purposes of the activist project and purposes of the researcher when the researcher not only adapted to the activist purposes but took responsibility for realizing these purposes as well. In some ways, however, I am coming at things from the other direction: going from activism as a way of life to using participatory action research to including in the study my own engagement with activism, as participatory action research inspired me to think differently about leading change as an activist.

As the founder of the Hashlamah Project, I had been invited to take part in discussions for an aforementioned participatory action research pilot project in November 2014, within the borders of Israel proper, as well as within neighboring Palestinian territories of East Jerusalem and even—it was proposed—within the Gaza Strip. Due to time constraints this not was possible the first time around. The seminars that I conducted were restricted to the study circles of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, spanning a whirlwind trip within the borders of Israel proper that only lasted just under three days. I went to conduct these seminars both as an activist and as a trainer of activists, as well as being a researcher to study the impact of these workshops.

There is something of a scholarly consensus that action research seeks to change well-established patterns of thinking and acting that express norms and values. Participatory action research is not only with and by people in a community, it is with, by, and *of* people in a community as in the case with the research participants of the Hashlamah Project. Each particular chapter of the organization is self-initiated and does not require the hierarchical oversight or approval of the project's founder—or anyone else. This, however, must be

emphasized as true so long as all is in alignment with guiding principles of nonaggression—neither physical, nor verbal, whether with regards to the Israeli or Palestinian sides of the conflict and politics emanating therefrom. Simply, in terms of precise linguistic definitions and word usage: something that advocates aggression cannot pretend to be “hashlamah,” reconciliation, and “*rebalancing*.”

Nonaggression does not mean having to be defenseless, nor passive when aggressed against. I have, in recent years, traveled to areas of conflict abroad. As a martial arts teacher, I always emphasize security, preparedness and training for everyone who faces threats to safety due to social activism, but especially for activists and political dissidents. It would be no exaggeration to suggest that my near-obsessive level of training in martial arts was driven by feelings of need for security during the course of my early activism and direct action in my teenage years, into my 20s, when my ecologically-driven activism work earned me death threats from loggers, furriers, and even the head of Proctor and Gamble’s corporate security, for having infiltrated the company for two years and leaking information on their environmental and animal abuses.

Issues of aggression, preparedness, and defense became highlighted to me when I returned home from Israel, towards the beginning of December 2014. The concerns of the Israeli stakeholders in the pilot study became all too understandable to me. As previously noted, it was the events that transpired upon my return that led to the shift in focus from the Hashlamah Project broadly, to confronting threats and fears and persevering in their face. I had just conducted two nearly identical seminar sessions that partially addressed issues of confronting these fears, threats and yet, in spite of these, still driving forward with the activism and dissenting opinions, which we know we must continue on with. When I gave these talks, I felt

incredibly self-assured. I believed in each word I spoke without any wavering. But when I returned home, I learned that one individual who had feigned interest in Hashlamah Project endeavors in California and later in Illinois, was in fact collecting information on us, to pass to a figure well known within the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and throughout Wahhabist and “ISIS” (Da`esh) circles.

To make a long story as short as it can be, when I returned, this person named “Jay” had contacted my family with multiple threats against my life, my wife’s life, and my children’s lives. Members of law enforcement who had been investigating this person—who is cited in the 9/11 Commission Report—told me that these threats were “credible” and “should be taken very seriously.”

I finally understood a bit more of what so many in Israel had been expressing to me, even though I very much thought I understood before. Before this change in my life, I felt that the project highlighted my privilege as an American Jew (even if Judeo-Sufi in personal approach to religion). I did not have the concerns that, for instance, the Egyptian chapter had.⁷ Living in America, I believed, insulated me from at least any threats that were credible. This belief was a bubble that burst when I returned home, confronted by the threats from this “Jay.” It was further dissolved after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris, just weeks later in February 2015, and finally, by the wave of threats that came after the aforementioned Hashlamah counter-protest video went viral in October 2015.

Without making this overly-focused on these specific threats, and their relation to the shifted focus of my dissertation, I will say that it was a strange twist of irony and fate that half of my workshops in Israel were focused upon this very topic which I admittedly felt insulated from.

⁷ I have written about this more extensively in an unpublished action research study (Naziri, 2015).

I can no longer say that I feel this insulation. I also completely understand the concerns of participants in Israel and elsewhere—perhaps even more so, in that my name has been mentioned specifically in a *fatawat* targeting me and the Hashlamah Project as *kaffir* endeavors which it is obligator or *wajib* for the “believer” to fight against through physical violence.

Limitations

It is my hope that all participants and also other relevant organizations will benefit from this research. The particular participants as far as members of the Hashlamah Project chapters are concerned, will be those active within Israel and Palestine as well as in the United States. Initially, my intention was to focus only on the Israeli and Palestinian chapters entirely, but throughout the course of my work and research, the Trump Era, and the hate crime wave in the United States after Election Day in November of 2016, made it clear that the United States might in fact be just as relevant to discussing the topic of persevering in the face of fear and threats.

The fact that I am a stakeholder in the Hashlamah Project would be less than ideal in most social research, but the participatory action research which inspires this study does not require that the facilitator have no stake in the process. Accordingly, what might be seen as a limitation to some is in fact, here, a strength. Further, there are some key ways in which concerns about this can be mitigated, including the fact that each Hashlamah Project chapter is autonomous and the organization is completely decentralized. While I could be considered the founder of the organization, and I hold positions within it, there is no hierarchy and no structured oversight. As noted, each chapter oversees itself, and each is self-initiated and organized.

I am a key stakeholder, but I am not the only one. In this way, any research involving this project that I initiated is not in any way an evaluation of what I do. It must further be emphasized that this is not research studying what I personally am already doing, even though I am working

with the Hashlamah Project. Any research presented in later chapters is about autonomous groups and their self-initiated activities.

Ethical Considerations

The ethics involved in this research also have to do with the dilemma of the very research at hand, as an activist involved in leading change, under life threatening situations. Can social justice work and, in particular, the Hashlamah Project be sustainable when fear reigns? Are we endangering the lives of others by continuing to work with them? In order to mitigate ethical concerns, the option I have chosen at this point is to share the burden and involve others more intensely in researching how to function under these circumstances, even when threat might take different forms for other members. This makes all the stakeholders researchers as well, even when I take main responsibility for monitoring, writing about, and sharing the wisdoms and options that evolve from this study.⁸ Will the research cause harm to participants? Realistically, we do not have a definable answer to these questions yet. Nevertheless, they need to be mentioned and posed as ethical concerns.

The Structure of the Dissertation

In the first chapter I have presented the ideas, theories, concepts and methodological plan for this dissertation. I explained that the research builds on the Hashlamah Project its work, the reason for it and the backlash. I looked at the research question(s) that have directly grown from ongoing activism and action research I have been engaged in over the past years. Further, I examined my positionally and vantage point for successfully conducting the research in this dissertation. Finally, I looked at epistemological considerations, limitations and ethical considerations.

⁸ In line with this issue, I will explore Cynthia Cockburn's (1998) methodology in Chapter III.

Chapter II discusses the theoretical framework of this dissertation. It draws from literature that I found on persevering with activism in the face of such threats. This is not only relative to social justice movements, but also with respect to the implications of social justice work that is seen as too radical—the tension between purpose and consequences, courage and fear, in relation to social justice work. Furthermore, Chapter II examines how an underlying sense of fear is a common thread in all of the key issues that must be faced in this sort of activism, particularly when and where one reaches a point of being noticed for such work and is then made a target by social or familiar forces opposing justice and reconciliation.

Chapter III discusses my reflections on a pilot study, as well as the methods employed, and why the Hashlamah Project has such an emphasis on face-to-face interactions. It discusses ethics and positionality and potential conflict of interests, as well as issues of risks and consent. It looks at the logistics of the research and the interviewing process and finally the goals of the interviews and analysis of the data and unforeseen obstacles in conducting the interviews.

Chapter IV discusses the process by which data were generated, as well as presenting the findings of this study. A few significant thematic categories worthy of note emerged in the analysis of the data. These high frequency descriptors surfaced across all the interviews and mapped to multiple thematic categories which are coded from the outset of each interview. The high frequency descriptors underscore key discourse used by participants and displays language accentuating the relevance of the thematic categories to the study. Chapter IV further discusses the patterns, relationships and themes—supported by the data—presented in the findings of my research.

Chapter V is a discussion of the findings of the interviews in the preceding chapter, as I examine what stood out as the most prominent threats experienced, reflection on the way they

dealt with the threats and how they are to be interpreted in relation to existing relevant literature. I further look at the themes that emerged, and how they related to one another. For instance, reflection on gender-related experiences and threats will naturally and intersectionally overlap with activism for social justice. Furthermore, in conclusion, I look at what new insights emerge from this study compared to existing knowledge the literature talked about.

Throughout this dissertation, I identify major fields of scholarship and research that inform the study of the issues related to the Hashlamah Project, bridge and peace building between Israelis and Palestinians as well as Jews and Muslims more broadly, as well as how such peace activism can move forward in the face of risks and threats from fundamentalist elements within both communities.

Chapter II: Framing the Research: Integrating Relevant Theory, Research, and Practice

Prelude: Religion as a Path Towards Reconciliation

In presenting the study topic and its relevance to existing research, literature and practice in the field, it is helpful to first note that the emergence of the Hashlamah project was initially inspired by Yablon's (2010) article, "Religion as a Basis for Dialogue in Peace Education Programs," as well as Yildirim's (2009) "The Medina Charter: A Historical Case of Conflict Resolution." Yablon contended that the proverbial wheel did not need to be reinvented. This resonated deeply with me as the roots of the early community of Muhammad's "Islam," and the predominantly Jewish social context of the *Constitution of Medina* were at the heart of my master's thesis. There was already a model and existing precedence for Jewish and Muslim collaboration within the same society and confederation. This understanding is ultimately the foundation of all Hashlamah work.

I subsequently went deeper into Yildirim's (2009) study of the *Constitution of Medina* (Naziri, 2015) purporting a redesign of *the Constitution itself*, something which became a project of sorts with the Israeli Hashlamah chapters through, participatory action research study in the aforementioned November 2014 pilot study. My intention was to come up with a collaborative draft of what I referred to as a "New Constitution" for an equilateral formal or informal federation of Gaza-Israel-West Bank. I wanted to engage through participation in chapters most directly involved and learn more about what the response to this approach would be. For the sake of representing the perspectives and political concerns of all stakeholders, I emphasized that one could view this either as a contract between governments and states, or as a voluntary contract between individuals on community levels. This insight and the responses received showed me, as well as Hashlamah participants, that reconciliation could occur, even on a grassroots level.

Ultimately, however, it was not just the inability to see this possibility that would keep people away. During the course of my trip and seminars it was made abundantly clear that fear itself—of retaliation, ostracism and even terrorism—was a major hurdle for many open-minded potential participants to cross. As such, this fear and how we deal with it and move forward with our activism became core to my continued research.

Topical Categories of the Literature Review

As a foundation of the study, in this chapter I provide a critical analysis and synthesis of theory, research and activism on Israel-Palestine. The emphasis is on the complexity of power relations, then issues related to risk and fear. It is organized around three relevant dimensions of leading change that are represented in the publications and documentaries in this chapter. It upholds a thematic division between, on the one hand, broad critical scholarship on the socio-historic and political complexity of “thinking Israel-Palestine,” and on the other hand, a very specific focus on current dialogue, activism and resistance in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territories, which can be extrapolated to related activism abroad, with respect to Jewish-Muslim reconciliatory work.

The chapter is grouped into three broad topical categories, all relevant to this study and its related activism: intellectual leadership; relational leadership and grassroots activism, and the place for perseverance throughout each. In the case of intellectual leadership, I review critical perspectives on dominant discourses in ideas that have emerged from scholarship and add to new knowledge. In some cases, I show how authors struggled with the pressures not to take sides and when they did, how they got punished for doing so. I discuss the risks related to such intellectual leadership, for instance, as we will see with some scholars being demonized. These are the risks critical—or social justice and activist—scholars take when they go against the grain.

In the case of relational leadership, I look at the use of media and arts, in the form of documentaries. In most of the examples I explore, the documentaries seek to trigger empathy as a way of helping the viewer to understand the position of the perceived “other.” Empathy is an absolute requirement for change, justice, and, thus, reconciliation, and, as we will see, emerges as a key feature of this study.

Finally, I will look at grassroots activism, including some documentary material as well as on the ground “street” activism and Hashlamah Project work, with perseverance highlighted at all three levels. Much of this literature already specifically focuses on grassroots initiatives but a broader critical grounding is needed in order to place them in their socio-historic, economic and political contexts.

This chapter focuses on works that provide cutting-edge solutions to this generations-old conflict, rather than spending one more time going over the approaches and proposals that have already proven to be unacceptable to both sides in this conflict and thus irrelevant to forward-moving solutions. Such solutions include every proposed variation of the Two-State model, which does not resolve issues of settlements, perceived security, or Jerusalem. A purely “One State” model that seeks to erase any distinction between Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank, also creates as many problems for people on both sides of the conflict as it solves. Each of the three approaches aims to maintain a distinct political, social and religious nature. The political orientation of Gaza is quite distinct from that in the West Bank, and the respective parties in control of each are both equally unwilling to give up power. Israel does not want to lose its Jewish character by becoming a minority in the single state. Accordingly, the Hashlamah Project has been oriented towards an anarchic “No State” solution as an overarching ideal, but, pragmatically, has promoted a single federation of three distinct cultures and states. As such, it

may seem a dismissal of ideals and proposals related to a two-state solution, but that approach has already been demonstrated as unacceptable to both sides in that it does not and cannot address certain key contentions such as those related to Jerusalem, settlements, security, and free, unobstructed travel. Even then, this should serve only as a backdrop to the concluding research on confronting fear and risk in this and similar activism.

This chapter also aims to describe and explain the complexity of current activism and resistance in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the focus on fear, risks and perseverance (*sumud* in Arabic). Here the emphasis lays on real life initiatives—rather than abstractions or broad approaches—on the distinctions and overlap between dialogue, activism and resistance as well as on my own positioning, and that of the Hashlamah Project within this complexity.

Intellectual Leadership and a Historical-Critical Reassessment of Israeli Nationalist Claims

Intellectual leaders are characterized by seeing ideas and values that transcend immediate practical needs and still change and transform their social milieu. First described by Burns (1978), intellectual leaders were one of the four types of transformational leaders he documented. According to Burns, the different categories of transformational leadership are intellectual, reform, revolutionary, and heroic (or charismatic). In the case of transformational leadership, a leader works with others to identify needed change. They then create a vision to guide the change by inspiring and executing the change in tandem with committed members of a group.

Transformational leaders seek solutions that are both innovative and without constraints, whereas transactional leaders are characterized by working within existing structures to attain goals. Intellectual leaders, by contrast, are by nature in conflict with the status quo and carry with them a vision of transforming society by raising social consciousness. In contrast to the status

quo, from this perspective, intellectual leaders are the outliers of their times and naturally conflict with the prevailing assumptions in society or in this case academia.

Specifically, an intellectual leader is devoted to observing ideas and values that transcend immediate practical needs and still change and transform their social environment. Thus, the intellectual leader has a vision to transform society by raising social consciousness, and by creating a clear vision of the future. To confirm this, Burns (1978) stressed that the “concept of intellectual leadership brings in the role of conscious purpose drawn from values” (p. 142).

Collins (2013) discussed intellectual activism in her *On Intellectual Activism*. As a sociologist, she challenged readers to rethink the potential of speaking truth to power and examined both the role of the intellectual in public life and how well intellectual leaders communicate questions of contemporary social issues to the public at large. This means that intellectual leaders are not neutral. In particular, when they seek to speak truth to power, they take a stand. Yet, in academia, many scholars of Israel-Palestine issues and conflicts specifically are pressured not to take sides, as though colonial endeavors and apartheid conditions are merely a matter of subjective opinion that cannot be judged or compared to now delegitimized governments.

Ilan Pappé is one of the most obvious examples of someone who resisted these pressures, and where his intellectual leadership has resulted in immense backlash that has cost him professionally. Pappé’s (2004) work *A History of Modern Palestine; One Land, Two People*, traced the history of Palestine from the Ottomans in the 19th century. The work includes the events that span the British Mandate, into the establishment of the state of Israel through the wars of 1947 through 1949, with particular attention to the formal establishment of the state in 1948. Pappé went further and looked at the subsequent wars and conflicts which have emanated

from this founding, and which continue today. He examined the events of the 1990s into the early 21st century as well. Throughout his research, Pappé tied these events in with the historical incidences from which they reel. He looked at the turn things began to *appear* to take with the Oslo peace accord negotiations, and the aftermath of failed promises of the 1990s, which, he said, culminated in the second *intifadhah* and a still-growing sense of militancy on both sides of the conflict(s). It is worth noting that Pappé did not simply chronicle the failures of the 1990s as inevitable but explained the reasons behind the failed approaches and proposals. He also reflected upon the flaws with two-state solutions proposed thus far, and the increased sense of hopelessness for the future since the erection of the wall dividing Israel from the Palestinian territories. Some of these flaws involve how the settlements preclude a two-state solution, and how their continued existence, and even escalation, is leading to an increased sense that any proposed solution is utterly hopeless.

Within the context of the Hashlamah Project Foundation, there has been something of a long-standing “play on words” with respect to a two- or one-state solution. Within Orthodox Jewish circles, the term “Hashlamah” is ironically used to refer to *Eretz Yisrael Hashlamah*, or the “Greater Land of Israel.” This is not where the foundation derives the name, however—far from it—though the words work nicely into some of what we have discussed with Israelis about the flaws of a so-called “two state solution,” as enumerated by Pappé (2004, 2007, 2008).

The term “Hashlamah,” refers to “reconciliation,” or “completion” in the sense of the final and complete act of peacemaking. But the term is used in various colloquial contexts for “completion” as well, including the term for Israeli “make up” exams, and the like. In terms of Hebrew-Arabic sister language cognates, “*Hashlamah*” is the form of “*Shalom*” parallel to the Arabic “*Al-Islam*” or “*Aslama*” as it derives in the fourth verbal form from “*Salaam*.” Irony?

Coincidence? *Qismet*? Whatever the case may be, the Project has collectively come to an understanding that the aims of the Hashlamah Project and a future of social justice, peace and reconciliation *cannot* come about through a so-called two-state solution. It is this very political point of view that makes Hashlamah members vulnerable to attacks or threats from radical right-wing elements within Jewish and Muslim communities.

While beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully discuss, the summarized “solution” proposed within the context of the Hashlamah Study Circles is more akin to a three-in-one single federation, which would allow Gaza-Israel-West Bank to operate much in the same way as, for example, Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky in the United States—that is, under a federal system. While an approximation, this approach has resolved every contention between Jewish and Muslim participants within the Hashlamah Project Study Circles. To that end, the criticisms of the two-state proposal in Pappé’s (2007) work can be considered and have been a form of moral support for Hashlamah participants.

To that end, I originally intended to involve Pappé in this dissertation directly. I was aware, that Pappé’s work had caused him to pay the high price of relentless attacks critical scholars can face. The backlash against Pappé in academia, however, was so great that it was agreed between him and myself, that his direct involvement in my dissertation might actually be an obstacle for its (hopefully) broad acceptance in academia, even though his research methods are sound and his works rigorously documented and relevant to my own. Having him sign off on my work, could place me in the same camp as him, and would likely vicariously cause me to experience some of the backlash against him before even beginning my academic career.

While Pappé is without question a friend of the Palestinian people, his perspective is one of a radical Israeli-Jew, and not the perspective of the victims of Israeli state oppression itself.

From the Palestinian perspective (and more broadly among critical scholars internationally) there is little contestation about the power of Edward Said's intellectual leadership. I examined his "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims" (Said, 1979b) as an anchor of historical critique on Israel-Palestine. This article appeared in the journal *Social Text* in 1979, shortly after the publication of his groundbreaking work, *Orientalism* (Said, 1979a). In this essay, Said examined what he described as the concealed history of Zionism. Said directly linked that hidden history to 19th and early 20th century European imperialist theory and colonialism.

Said (1979b) explained, "Palestine has always played a special role in the imagination and in the political will of the West" (p. 8). He noted that even the use of the name "Palestine" is controversial in some Western circles, when dealing with the region in the Mandate Era and before.⁹ It is imagined that the term was not used since Roman times, save in the context of British administration, but as he notes, this is far from the truth. The term "Palestine" was used well before Britain came on to the scene. While it did not refer to a "state," this is a moot point—as the modern nation-state was not a developed idea until fairly recently.

Scholars such as Black (2000), Carneiro (1970), and Foucault (2007), have argued that the nation state is a modern phenomenon and an inadvertent by-product of 15th century intellectual discoveries. The development of the modern state, they explain, included advancements in political economy, capitalism, mercantilism, political geography, and geography combined with cartography (Mikhailova, 2013) and advances in map-making technologies (Branch, 2011). This idea of a nation-state itself, was and is associated with the rise

⁹ The Mandate Era, or Mandate Palestine was a geopolitical entity under British administration that had been carved out of Ottoman Southern Syria after World War I. British civil administration in Palestine existed from 1920 until 1948. During its operation, it was known simply as Palestine, however, in retrospect, it has been known as Mandatory or Mandate Palestine.

of the modern system of states—even if predating it—and is often termed the “Westphalian system” in reference to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia.

Historically, the nation existed first, then nationalist movements arose for sovereignty, with the nation-state finally emerging after-the-fact, to meet that sociological demand. In short, the nation-state is essentially a 19th century European phenomenon, facilitated by developments such as state-mandated education, mass literacy, and mass media. For instance, Hobsbawm (1990) argued that the French state preceded the formation of the French people, and that the state made the French nation, not French nationalism, which emerged at the end of the 19th century, at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, which spanned from 1894 until 1906 (Greenfield, 1992; Kohn, 1955).

On the other hand, nations such as Germany and Italy came into existence with campaigns by nationalists, during the 19th century. The nationalistic sense of common identity was at first a cultural movement, such as in the *Völkisch* movement in German-speaking states, which rapidly acquired a political significance. Historians Kohn (1955), Greenfield (1992), and others have classified nations such as Germany or Italy, where cultural unification preceded state unification, as ethnic nations or ethnic nationalities. They argued, however, that “state-driven” national unifications, such as in France, England, or China, tended to emerge in multiethnic societies, producing a traditional national heritage of territory-based nationalities.

In Europe, during the 18th century, the classic nonnational states were multiethnic empires, the Austrian Empire, Kingdom of France, and Kingdom of Hungary. The Caliphate was another such system, which ruled Palestine as a nevertheless distinct province until the demise of the Ottoman Caliphate with World War I (Hobsbawm, 1990). It is no wonder, then, that there was no “Palestinian State” before this concept of the nation-state itself spread to the region of

Palestine. Arguments that support Israel based on the false implicit assumption that anything resembling a nation-state existed in ancient Judea, are disingenuous or misinformed, at best.

The fact is that the term “Palestine” was used in literature and even maps, well before the Mandate Era or the *Yishuv* (the body of Jewish residents in Palestine, corresponding to post-Ottoman Syria until 1917–1920 and later Mandate Palestine 1920–1948). The disinformation surrounding the myth was constructed in large part by Israeli politicians. This is exemplified in the infamous quote from Golda Meir that “there was no Palestine,” when she also said “it was not as if there was a Palestinian people in Palestine and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them.” (as cited in Karmi, 2003, para. 1). Statements such as “they did not exist” are ultimately part of a broader, more nefarious agenda to dehumanize the Palestinian people and delegitimize their struggle for independence and autonomy.

While an ostensibly small point, Said (1979b) explained that this gets to the heart of the matter, as “Palestine carries so heavy an imaginative and doctrinal freight—transmuted from a reality into a nonreality, from a presence into an absence” (p. 10) that to be specific in speech and in history is itself something of a revolutionary act. One of Said’s most poignant statements to this effect was:

Every idea or system of ideas exists *somewhere*, it is mixed in with historical circumstances, it is part of what one may very simply call “reality.” One of the enduring attributes of self-serving idealism, however, is the notion that ideas are just ideas and that they exist only in the realm of ideas. The tendency to view ideas as pertaining only to a world of abstractions increases among people for whom an idea is essentially perfect, good, uncontaminated by human desires or will. Such a view also applies when the ideas are evil, absolutely perfect in their evil, and so forth. (p. 10)

Words matter. Technical nuance matters. “One must admit,” Said (1979b) stated, “that all liberals, and even most ‘radicals’ have been unable to overcome the Zionist maneuver of equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism” (p. 14). Part of history mattering, Said explained, is a historical-critical approach to events previously unquestioningly narrated in Zionist chronicles of

the history of the modern Levant, such as the massive land sale by the absentee landlords of the Lebanese Sursuk family. Anecdotes like this are traditionally over-emphasized by Israeli nationalist writers, who seek to portray incidents as the norm, and thereby falsely present land-theft as almost implicitly nonexistent. While there was a large swath of Palestine marshland sold off through this deal, the impression given is that seized Palestinian land was “unused” land, where “no one” lived. As in the cases of Pappé and Noam Chomsky—who was notoriously barred from entry into Israel in recent years—the backlash Said faced in academia was initially significant and severe.

Subsequent to the Six Day War, which occurred between the 5th and 10th of June 1967, Said emerged as a public intellectual acting politically to counter the stereotyped misrepresentations portrayed by Western—largely United States-based—news media. Said (1979b) explained that the so-called “Arab-Israeli” wars were much different than the media had portrayed them. His explanation brought the Palestinian voice to the broader global public and to intellectuals in the West and noted how many reports were simply divorced from the historical realities of the Middle East, in general, and Palestine and Israel, specifically.

Contrary to how extreme Said would be portrayed by his detractors, in the essay “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims” (Said, 1979b) he actually argued in favor of the political legitimacy and philosophic authenticity of the Zionist claims to a Jewish homeland, but coupled this with recognition for the inherent right of national self-determination of the Palestinian people.

Said was actually banned by the Palestinian Authority in 1995, in response to various political criticisms. In this way we see that threats and opposition of the sort already mentioned do not emanate from just one side of the Israel-Palestine conflict(s), but instead from both. The

Palestinian Authority's ban on the sale of Said's books was lifted eventually, when Said publicly praised Yasir Arafat for rejecting Prime Minister Ehud Barak's offers at the Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David (2000) in the United States (M. Wood, 2003).

Said endured political repercussions, including further repression and censorship, such as the cancellation of an invitation to give a lecture to the Freud Society, in Austria, in February 2001 (Said & Barsamian, 2003). Johann Schülein, President of the Freud Society said that the invitation was rescinded because of "the political development in the Middle East, and the consequences" (as cited in D. Smith, 2001, para. 2) and because of "the very serious matter" of accusations against Said of anti-Semitism. Any such accusation, Schülein said, "has become more dangerous" (as cited in D. Smith, 2001, para. 11) in the politics of Austria, he said, and thus the Freud Society cancelled their invitation so as "to avoid an internal clash" (as cited in D. Smith, 2001, para. 13) of opinions, about him, which they believed was certain to create an ideological divide in the Freud Society (D. Smith, 2001). In *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward Said* (Said & Barsamian, 2003) Said likened this political situation of repression, academic ostracism and censorship to the situation that Noam Chomsky has endured as a public intellectual. Said explained, "It's very similar to his; He's a well-known, great linguist. He's been celebrated and honored for that, but he's also vilified as an anti-Semite and as a Hitler worshiper" (Said & Barsamian, 2003, p. 85), in spite of the fact that Chomsky is Jewish. Said affirmed,

For anyone to deny the horrendous experience of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust is unacceptable. We don't want anybody's history of suffering to go unrecorded and unacknowledged. On the other hand, there's a great difference, between acknowledging Jewish oppression and using that as a cover for the oppression of another people. (Said & Barsamian, 2003, p. 178)

Two States or One?

In a work that challenged the failed mainstream approach of a two state solution, Chomsky, Pappé, and Barat (2015) asked: Which is more viable, the binational or one-state solution? They sought to answer how Palestine solidarity activists can combat the Israeli apartheid state and the related occupation of the West Bank. Some of the specifics they looked at were the importance of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which we will see is a theme throughout the following works.

Pappé and Chomsky together form a powerful team, due in large part to the prominence of their names in the struggle for Palestinian liberation, dignity and justice. Together with Barat they looked at the road ahead for Palestinians, and how pressure can be put on Israel from the outside to end its oppression of the Palestinian people. This work followed up on Chomsky and Pappé's (2010) collaboration, *Gaza in Crisis*. In this work, the authors contended that Israel more or less just participates in peace talk charades, with every intention of carrying out acts of warfare, aggression and at times land-grabbing. The conversations in the later book were conducted in face-to-face conversation, dialogue and, at times, debate. With Barat directing them, both Chomsky and Pappé came to a well-reasoned conclusion that a two-state solution will ultimately fail, be impossible, and highlight the necessity of a single, secular-democratic state. If Israel does not work towards this goal, it is my view that this will ultimately be to its own undoing and inadvertent destruction.

Although the perspective in my work and proposal by the Hashlamah Project is akin to a “three-in-one” single federation, on a personal level, I believe that the institution of a state in any form, is violence and I oppose it as an anarchist.¹⁰ With that in mind, however, I am also

¹⁰ One who believes in the dissolving of all government as an ultimate goal for human societal evolution, and believes accordingly in the organization of society on a voluntary, cooperative basis.

pragmatic and believe that dissolving statehood is not something humanity is necessarily ready for at this stage in our sociological evolution. Therefore, I believe that anarchism as an ideal can be reached for through the context of severely bound governments, restrained as constitutional republics, whether federations or individual states. Part of the problem that the authors point out is that Israel does not have a true democracy nor a real constitution. As highlighted in the now oft-repeated 2014 pilot study, the composition of such a true, authentic and meaningful constitution—modeled after a historical precedence for Jewish and Muslim co-existence in a single nation, is a preliminary need if peace is to be achieved.

Academic Distortions of the History and Modern Context of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

The transformative nature of intellectual leadership anchors in questioning dominant representations of knowledge. Said is without question one of the founders of critique of mainstream Israeli-Palestinian history. His highly-regarded, co-edited collection, *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (Said & Hitchens, 1988) addressed the historical fate of the Palestinian people and how it has been justified by “spurious academic attempts to dismiss their claim to a home within the boundaries of historical Palestine and even to deny their very existence” (Said & Hitchens, 1988, back cover). In the introduction to this book, Said (1988) noted that Palestine is “an almost mythological territory saturated with religious ideology” (p. 1). This easily bleeds over into Israeli and Western academic treatments of the region and the conflicts that gave birth to and sustain the modern Israeli State. To tackle academic attempts to legitimize the colonization of Palestine,¹¹ a chapter is contributed by Finkelstein

¹¹ Israeli historians such as Shapira (1977), Aaronson (1990), and others have examined the mechanism of settlement in the Palestinian land and labor markets and concluded that it was motivated and enacted as a national project, innocent of any colonialist impulse. Pappé (2008) noted that “in 1948, when the Zionist movement took over most of the land of historical Palestine by force, it was still referred to as ‘redemption’” (p. 616) of the land.

(1988) dissecting assertions by Joan Peters (1984), a well-known British researcher with regards to the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine prior to 1948. Finkelstein notes that Peters wrongly asserted, throughout her research, that before Zionism, the land was empty space. In Part Two of *Blaming the Victims*, Said and other authors examined “myths old and new” (p. 71) related to the region and setting the stage for what this volume considers to be essentially modern academic fraud regarding Israel and Palestine studies. Other scholars, including Jewish ones as Norman Finkelstein, Peretz Kidron, and Noam Chomsky, have also been part of this quest for academic reason and historical-criticism—and have each faced professional and academic backlash and ostracism as a result.

Overall, the book edited by Said and Hitchens (1988) looks at Middle East research “where the truth about the Palestinians has been systematically suppressed” (Back cover). This focuses on what Said and other authors in this work identify as the “bogus—though still widely believed” (Back cover) myths regarding Palestinian reasons for fleeing their homes in 1948, as well as propaganda regarding Palestinian resistance in all its forms. At the heart of these myths is that Palestinians fled not because they expected to return after the fighting subsided but because they were essentially packing up and migrating to flee the war-torn region for good. Furthermore, such myths deny that Palestinian resistance, during this period, was actually resistance to terrorist aggressions from Jewish groups like Lehi, Irgun, and Stern. Instead, that resistance was long and ironically portrayed as the terrorism itself, perpetrating violence *against* Jewish immigrants.

Kimmerling (2006) in “The Continuation of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by ‘Academic’ Means,” rounds out the exposé of academic distortions of the history and modern context of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the crisis that the Palestinian people have continuously faced. He

noted that prior to 1967, there really was nothing available in English on Israel and Zionism: “Research on Palestinians was non-existent” (p. 447), with most writers approaching the situation as a “humanitarian” issue of refugees and the like. There were no actual “Palestinian” people in the mass consciousness of the West. This was largely, if not entirely, the result of Israeli propaganda in academia. As Palestine studies and historical critical approaches to the formation and subsequent history of the Israel State began to emerge, they were relegated to more or less “fringe” publishers according to Kimmerling. Major mainstream academia and media simply did not take critical inquiries seriously. This has framed the academic dialogue about Palestine and resulted in a clear bias that assumes Israeli-state legitimacy as either perspectively valid and requiring respect as a position worthy of consideration by the researcher, or, perhaps worse, as a foregone conclusion. The result is that any analysis that puts the onus of proof for national legitimacy on the colonial power is relegated to the fringes of academia—if not pushed out altogether—and denounced as unbalanced. A striking, recent example in U.S. academia is that of professor Norman Finkelstein who in his book, *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History* (2005), has dismantled scholars who have stood against him such as Alan Dershowitz. Jewish himself and the son of two Nazi Holocaust survivors, Finkelstein has been critical of Israeli State politics. He was nevertheless denounced by political opponents as “anti-Semitic” and a “self-hating Jew.” Rebeck and Sears (2009), in response to Israel Apartheid Week activities at Carleton University, wrote an open letter to the Canadian Federal Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, arguing that accusations of anti-Semitism are sometimes made with the goal of “silencing” criticism of Israel, as in the case of Finkelstein, who has now been academically blacklisted and is virtually

unemployable, aside from his career as an author. Rebeck and Sears, who were responding to coverage by the Israeli newspaper, *Haaretz*, stated:

Defenders of Israeli policy routinely attempt to direct our attention to abuses happening in other places and insist that a hidden agenda must underlie any focus on Israeli brutality in this unjust world. This argument would lead to paralysis in human rights activism by claiming that one must address all cases at once, or only the “worst” cases. Should we have told Rosa Parks, who refused to go the back of a segregated bus in Alabama in 1955, to quit whining as conditions were even worse in South Africa, or colonized Kenya, or for that matter for Palestinians in refugee camps? The deployment of anti-Semitism as an accusation to silence criticism of Israel is also a serious setback in genuine struggles against anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination. It is based on a claim that the State of Israel is the single outcome of the history of the Jewish people, the final end of generations of diasporic existence. It attempts to make the Zionist project of a Jewish nation the only legitimate project for all Jews. (para. 5)

New Theoretical Ways to Think About Palestinian Self-Determination

Not accepting the relegation of critical scholars on Israel-Palestine issues to the fringes of academia, Ronit Lentin, a journalist, scholar activist, and former resident of the State of Israel who migrated to Ireland, brought together, in 2006, a number of Palestinian, Israeli, American and British as well as Irish scholars for a conference at the Trinity College in Dublin which debated Palestine as a state of “exception.” This became the basis for an edited collection titled *Thinking Palestine*, (Lentin, 2008) with contributions from sociologists, historians, as well as legal experts and more.

Together, the inter-disciplinary group theorized “the question of Palestine.” Their intention was to present new theoretical ways for people to think about Palestine in a manner that is committed to Palestinian self-determination. The articles include contributions from the conference itself, as well as later revisions growing out of the conference, and in some cases, like Pappé (2008), entirely new pieces. The book is divided into sections such as “Palestine: Biopolitics and the States of Exception,” and “Palestine: Contested Representations.” A particularly interesting point made by Pappé was that “de-Zionization of Israel can bring about

the democratization of the country as a whole” (p. 150), thus giving the Palestinian resistance hope for change. He reasoned: “if Israel is seen as a permanent state of oppression, the Palestinians may glimpse a light at the end of their tunnel of suffering and abuse (p. 168).

Another contributor to the *Thinking Palestine* collection, Raef Zreik (2008), examined Israeli constitutionalism, arguing that

Israel is a scandalous case of the modern paradigm of sovereignty because it reveals what lies beneath the smooth surface of other countries. The persistence of the exception in Israel, the ongoing state of emergency, the violent moment of birth, and the persistence of its ethnic nature are features that one might find in some countries at some points in time. Israel is unique in that all of these features are present most of the time. (p. 131)

Allen (2008) focused on the everydayness of the occupation. She looked at the Second *Intifadhah* and how Israeli actions have impacted Palestinian civilian lives, commenting, “The first three years of the uprising was a period of constant disruption and uncertainty” (p. 453). The daily realities for Palestinians have included checkpoints and roadblocks that are raised and moved without any notice or predictability, making work, education, and travel nearly impossible. Palestinians had to face snipers hiding on rooftops, and jeeps filled with IDF soldiers to enforce police state curfews and the like. Centers of Palestinian culture and government were ransacked and burned. Signs can be found naming streets after fallen fighters, signs which were “crushed and uprooted by Israeli tanks . . . [a] synecdochic statement on the Palestinian government’s crippled status” (p. 460). Allen comments on how even with this move by the IDF, streets began cropping up with names like “Martyrs’ Passing” and “Martyrs’ Street” or “Martyrs’ Square,” quickly covered in commemorative posters of Palestinians killed during the Second *Intifadhah*. Allen further poignantly reflects,

The political and social significance of cultural practices whereby violence is routinized cannot be reduced to a claim that they shift the balance of the conflict in one direction or another. How can we acknowledge the power of violence in Israel’s colonial project in the occupied territories without either assuming it to be all-determining of Palestinian

experience, or championing every act of Palestinian survival to be heroic resistance? (p. 456)

Memorializing, she explains, is an act of storytelling, and in visual culture this naming of places in relation to the *Intifadhah* “is one way in which violence becomes routine” (Allen, 2008, p. 456).

She added:

When a variety of forms of violence are being mobilized to encourage, if not force, people to leave, the deflection of these measures through adaptation and just getting by becomes crucial. Palestinians sometimes call these practices “*sumud*,” [defined as] a nationalistically inflected form of stoicism. To “get used to it” (*ta`wud*) in the face of all that Israel threw at the Palestinians, became an act of resistance—to not be forced away—so much so that “*ta`wudna*” (we’ve gotten used to it) became a statement of popular revolutionary culture. (Allen, 2008, pp. 456–457)

Allen (2008) discussed how the occupation permeated and permeates every aspect of Palestinian existence during and since the Second Intifada, particularly as it relates to travel. With respect to movement through the geography of the West Bank, the aforementioned presence of martyrs’ posters and street names created something of joint-saturation of both the occupation and *istishhad* ([heroic] martyrdom).

Scholarship such as this exemplifies defiance to academic default bias in favor of the Israeli state, which refuses to consider or present colonialism and apartheid practices as a position worthy of debate. While these acts of academic resistance in intellectual leadership can and do result in backlash, those who are confronting and overcoming fears are slowly, but surely, turning the tide.

Social Justice and Political Opposition to Israeli Ethno-Nationalism

One of the authors who inspired the social justice perspective of the Hashlamah Project was Iris Marion Young, whose work is philosophically grounded but very useful for those with an activist mindset. For I. M. Young (2011) the concept of peace is relevant as an end goal, but must

follow, not necessarily precede, social justice. The popular reggae musician Peter Tosh (1977) sang “I don’t want no peace; I want equal rights and justice.” Peace without a foundation of justice is only temporary government control from an oppressive state. This is not peace at all. Justice must be seen as a necessary prerequisite for reconciliation, and finally peace. Young argued that social justice is not as simple as distributive justice. She critiqued prevailing theories and concepts of social justice, such as impartiality, formal equality, as well as the unitary moral subjectivity. She focused on how social justice is not about debts owed to individuals, but relationships between social groups. Young added that democratic theorists fail to confront the problem of an “inclusive participatory framework” due to assumptions of a homogeneous public that do not consider those who are not culturally identified with white European male norms of reason and respectability.

I. M. Young (2011) looked at structural injustices, seeking to account for them by determining what individuals are responsible for themselves. Young’s argument is that responsibility must take into account structural injustices that simply do not have any individual or institution to blame for assigning guilt as the cause of the social wrong. She argued that it is possible for one to be responsible for things in which many are implicated, beyond those directly guilty of creating such injustices. Simply by participating in the inherent oppression of a capitalist market, including (but not limited to) buying goods produced in sweatshops, one is partially responsible for the suffering and oppression of others who they have not directly subjugated. She called for a new model of responsibility, which she termed the social connection model, noting that political responsibility for injustice differs from ideas and assumptions about blame and guilt. This model and the related concepts argue that we must have an account of responsibility for justice that does not attempt to separate our social structures from our institutions, or limit

responsibility for oppression and injustice to those directly guilty of causing such things, even though they are maintained by power and privilege. We must accordingly take direct action, she argues, in order to lessen oppression and injustice, even if we did not create those situations.

I. M. Young's is an essential concept for people in Hashlamah Project Study Circles to understand, particularly on the Israeli-Jewish side of things. Many believe—wrongly—that they are not responsible for the suffering of the Palestinian people, as long as they are not directly engaged in causing it. But in a system where injustice and oppression are part of the status quo, the choice of passive acceptance, or even quiet rejection, is tantamount to complicity. The only way that one can be morally absolved of their responsibility—even if they have no direct guilt—is to engage that system of oppression, its structures and actors, and seek to bring it to its end.

Standing Against the Apartheid State

A further approach to solutions from actual people taking action and *doing* is suggested by Halper (2008). Drawing on years of directly confronting the mistreatment of the Palestinian people and the deprivation of their rights by the Israeli State he generates knowledge and pedagogies that bolster resistance to imperialism. His activist scholarship is an example of creating active engagements between academia and communities of resistance, rejecting models of academic radicalism that remain unaccountable to grassroots social movements, and exploring the community and academia as interlinked sites of the struggle for social justice and equal rights. An Israeli anthropologist and activist, he approaches the history and track record of the State from a historical-critical perspective. He suggested that the founders of Israeli society did indeed create many of the laudable things that Israeli nationalist boast of. But these early Zionist founders did all of this at the expense of the rights of the Palestinian people.

It was impossible, Halper (2008) argued, for a Jewish State and society to be created and sustained without imposing policies that amount to nothing short of ethnic cleansing, as well as continued occupation and apartheid-like discrimination. Halper is particular concerned with policies involving this continued oppression, including the demolition of Palestinian homes within Israel and the occupied West Bank. He said that he sought to go beyond “the membrane” (p. 19) covering the eyes of so many Israeli Jews from the reality facing the Palestinian people. He argued that Israel itself is not simply defined by geographical borders, but borders of oppression and a relationship with the Palestinian territories that constitute its negative space, while dismissing the legitimacy of that space, the people and governments within it. Halper questions whether Israel can survive as a State if it continues to insist on being a Jewish State with a dominant Jewish cultural character.

Similarly, Taraki (2006) argued this is not a situation of “both sides being equally in the wrong” (p. 449) and that Israelis must take ownership of that in order for the Palestinian voice to be heard. She said unequivocally that a “penchant for even-handedness, balance, and objectivity about the Palestinian-Israeli ‘conflict’ prevails in scholarly and journalistic writings on Palestine-Israel, albeit with varying degrees of sophistication” (p. 450). All of these attempts are framed in the context of what the author terms a “conflict paradigm” (p. 449) conceived of in a way that emerged and arose from the Israeli colonial project and thereby explicitly or implicitly “censors out or marginalizes other interpretive frameworks and ways of conceiving the dynamics of this colonial situation” (p. 457). Taraki explained, “The dynamics of repression were not genially viewed through the lenses of a conflict paradigm where one sides’ claims were balanced against those of the other” (p. 457), except in the case of outright apologists for the apartheid system itself. The author added that it was only because of this different framing of the conflict

that “the anti-apartheid struggle was thus not generally perceived as a conflict between two sides, but as a struggle between forces demanding equality and democratic representation and the racist state and its agents” (p. 453). Similarly, Taraki noted that the struggle for liberation from colonial oppression in Algeria was not framed as one in which each side had valid points that must be balanced against one another to achieve a sort of even-handedness of oppressor and oppressed.

Taraki (2006) examined a few works from authors who painstakingly attempt to demonstrate how different from the situation in South Africa the Palestine-Israel conflict is. But in doing so, Taraki argued, they end up highlighting the similarities more than drawing attention away from them. In conclusion, she asserted that “the issue of balance and even-handedness will plague Palestinian studies for a long time to come” (p. 452) so long as “the Israeli narrative” (p. 451) and Israeli exceptionalism remain unchallenged.

Resistance Within the Context and Borders of Israeli Occupation

Moving from defining the problems at hand to theorizing solutions, Rabkin’s (2006) *A Threat from Within: A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, looked at Zionism within the context of Jewish history, as an intellectual leader—approaching activism through academia. This work examined why there are many points of contention between traditional Judaism and the political ideology of Zionism. Rabkin looked at Jewish opposition to Zionism within religious, *charedi* (Ultra-Orthodox) communities in the United States and Israel alike, who see the aspirations of a Jewish state in the absence of *Mashiach* (Messiah) as religiously problematic at best, and at worst, a violation of the Talmudic “Three Oaths,” including a prohibition of *en masse* migration before the Messianic Era, as well as the prohibition of forming a Jewish enclave in *eretz yisrael* by means of “going up like a wall.” Rabkin began with discussion of the topic itself, speaking of history and historical-critical historiography as “the battlefield of history.” He defines

the nuanced differences between anti-Zionists and non-Zionists, positioning them within the context of world Jewry and typically self-described religious *chassidut* (Ultra-Orthodoxy).

Rabkin (2006) investigated the morphing in Jewish socio-religious concepts from messianism to nationalism: a bizarre modern phenomenon. He continued by examining the roots of secular-nationalistic Zionism and the Jewish religious response to its emergence throughout the many stages and even eras of the Israeli State's existence. Main characteristics of this response and resistance included but has not been limited to *charedi* opposition, on *halakhic* grounds, due to a debated prohibition on Jewish statehood, found in the aforementioned Talmudic "Three Oaths."

Other grounds for opposition have come from more liberal Jewish circles, resisting oppressions of the self-described Jewish State on moral grounds, rooted in the Torah and *halakhah*, but not expressly referenced to the context of Jewish statehood and nationalism. Such resistance within religious and cultural spheres has not been limited to Jewish circles, of course. Contrary to the popular assumption that nonviolent resistance is somehow alien to Palestinians, Awad's (1984) article, "Non-Violent Resistance: A Strategy for the Occupied Territories," argued, "non-violence is not an innovation in the struggle of the Palestinian people" (p. 25), dispelling the myth that Palestinians can only think of violent solutions to Israeli oppression. As well, rather than being a novel idea proposed by the West for Palestinian resistance, "Palestinians have used non-violent methods since the beginning of the 1930s side by side with the armed struggle in their attempts to achieve their goals against Zionism" (p. 27). Some examples Awad highlighted were the six-month strike of 1936 as well as the widespread Arab boycott of Israel. He noted that these days, nearly all Palestinian resistance to the occupation is in fact nonviolent but receives virtually no widespread attention globally. "School

and commercial strikes, petitions, protest telegrams, advertisements and condemnations in the daily papers, and the attempts to boycott Israeli goods are, in fact, manifestations of nonviolent struggle” (p. 27). He discussed the conditions in the occupied West Bank in the 1980s and Gaza Strip, finally noting that “for the Palestinians who are living in the West Bank and Gaza during this period, the most effective strategy is one of non-violence” (p. 22). Awad argued that “non-violent struggle is a total and serious struggle, nothing short of a real war” (p. 25). He noted that it is useful for particular circumstances, contexts and historical periods and may follow from, or exist before armed struggle. The idea of nonviolent resistance plays on the idea that “the Israeli soldier is a human being, not a beast devoid of conscience and feeling. He has an understanding of right and wrong to which it is possible to appeal” (p. 32). So too, Awad argued, “He can be demoralized. He constantly needs a reasonable justification for his activities. At another level, the Israeli government is sensitive to public opinion, making things like strikes and boycotts particularly effective means of non-violent war” (p. 27). In all, Awad summarized these as the most successful approaches: demonstrations, obstruction, refusal to cooperate, harassment, boycotts, strikes, alternative institutions (replacing unjust institutions), as well as civil disobedience. Not all resistance is nonviolent, but that will be addressed later.

Nonviolence as a strategy in Palestinian resistance is often overshadowed by incidences where people fight fire with fire. When the media almost exclusively highlight violent episodes—so commonplace in U.S. media as to be the rule—it is useful to understand that there is a different way to approach things: a way that is—as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. noted—much more difficult. King explained in his speech on receiving the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, that he was not nonviolent

for the sake of nonviolence, but for the sake of strategy. It is not widely known that Dr. King did believe in interpersonal self-defense as a human right.¹²

This is of particular relevance to the Hashlamah Project because we too view nonviolence as a useful strategy, even while not always being a moral requisite. Violent revolutionary resistance is sometimes ethically justifiable. From a Taoist perspective, nonviolence as a strategy, however, has superior effects when employed by a severely disempowered—and relatively unarmed—populace like the Palestinian people. When there is a superior “yang” force, responding with “yin” passivity will exhaust the aggression and lead to its decline. Palestinians, however, did not author violent resistance, nor does it continue to be their exclusive domain.

The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was a turning point in breaking the myth that violent extremism as protest was only a Palestinian phenomenon. Yuchtman-Yaar and Hermann (1998) tried to answer two questions about this. First, did the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin bring about any significant changes in the attitudes of the general Israeli Jewish population to anti-government protest? Second, were there systematic group differences within that range of attitudes before the assassination of Rabin and after? The findings from four public opinion surveys indicated a marked decline in general support for such protests immediately after the assassination, due to what is presumed to be the shock effect of the

¹² “There is nothing in the history that suggests that Martin Luther King felt that guns weren’t useful for self-defense,” Adam Winkler, UCLA law professor and author of the book *Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America* (2011) said, in a January 17, 2016 interview with Whack (2016), “Clearly, guns were used to protect [King] . . . [He] could not rely on the government” (para. 5). Winkler argued that after the 1956 bombing, which occurred during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King applied for a concealed carry permit. He was denied by a county sheriff. Friends and close associates, such as King’s adviser, Glenn Smiley described King’s house as an “arsenal.” William Worthly, a journalist who covered the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, reported that once, during a visit to King’s parsonage, he went to sit down on an armchair in the living room and, to his surprise, almost sat on a loaded gun. Notwithstanding, King did not like guns or violence and realized that for his particular role in the movement, he would have to eschew them for his message and method to be effective.

killing. The authors argued that this decline was clear and noticeable even across the spectrum of political and socio-demographic of the Israeli public. This suggests a plateau was attained shortly after the assassination. It has remained “almost intact” in the years that have followed.

Yuchtman-Yaar and Hermann also saw evidence indicating the existence of significant group differences in attitudes toward political protest, most noticeably before Rabin’s assassination. In all, the authors posit that these changes in attitudes were systematically related to the influences of guilt by association as well as socioeconomic status.

I further grounded my research into this theme of Jewish opposition to the Israeli State and related ethno-nationalism using Greenstein’s (2014) *Zionism and Its Discontents: A Century of Radical Dissent in Israel/Palestine*. This work focused on four different, yet connected, attempts of Jewish opposition to Zionism and the settlement of Palestine before and after the establishment of the Israeli State in 1948. Greenstein presents historical narratives of such movements beginning back in the 1920s. He addressed the role of the Palestinian Communist Party. From there he moved to the bi-nationalist movement, and the period after 1948. Greenstein also examined the anti-Zionist Matzpen group, which was active from the 1960s to the 1980s. In spite of this lengthy period of activity, the group has received relatively little attention globally, in the media or in terms of scholarly attention. The author seeks to highlight the historical reality that Palestinian Arabs, and Mizrachi and European Jews alike have had long-standing opposition to the movement of Zionist settlement. The work is, in short, a historical look at Zionism from the perspective of its internal and external opponents.

Greenstein (2014) also looked at conceptual issues of colonialism and, related to this, the settlements, ethnicity, class, identity, human rights as well as social power and privilege. These

are presented as global relations and concepts that can be compared and understood in relation to parallel situations and similar relationships and power structures throughout the world.

Works such as these have been essential for the undertaking of the Hashlamah Project, as the vast majority of Jews involved with us globally are in some way a part of anti-Zionist—or perhaps more accurately *anti-Israeli State*—endeavors (some believing in alternative forms of “Zionism” that are entirely different from the historical manifestation of the movement). Those who maintain a type of “benevolent Zionism” justify this by calling attention to the early variety of Zionisms. Zionism was produced by various philosophers representing different approaches concerning the objective and path that Zionism should follow. These included Political, Practical, Synthetic, Labor, Revisionist, Cultural, Revolutionary, Religious, Reform and other concepts of Zionism. Today there are even those who regard themselves as “Anarchic” Zionists who do not believe in Jewish State at all, but instead believe in the right of free migration of the Jewish and all other peoples.

Different anarchist groups, historically, had different views on Zionism and the Jewish question. Bernard Lazare saw no contradiction between the two and was a notable figure in both the French Anarchist movement as well as early Zionist movement. The later Territorialist movement, especially the Freeland League, under the leadership of Isaac Nachman Steinberg, was very similar to Anarchism in its approach. Others, such as the notable authors and Jewish mystics, Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem, advocated completely nonnationalist forms of Zionism, and promoted the idea of creating a binational Jewish-Arab federation in Palestine. Critics of Anarcho-Zionism could argue that the absence of a State precludes such an approach from being “Zionist,” in any meaningful way. Still, this variety of interpretations of Zionism has always existed, and even from the inception of the Zionist movement, there were key figures

who saw Zionism as something that did not necessarily require a state apparatus. While most contemporary anarchists reject the notion of Zionism outright, those who in the past might have been regarded as Anarcho-Zionist, today support the idea of what has been dubbed the “No-State Solution” (Templer, 2003).

Within the context of Israeli Hashlamah chapters, however, there are relatively few from these circles involved. Most there who have connected with us have been from the Israeli Left, and many do not regard themselves as “Anti-Zionist.” In fact, anecdotally, many claim that they *are* Zionists, but when pressed for a definition of what “Zionism” means to them, they produce an explanation that turns out to be worlds apart from the definition given when I ask Muslim participants, what “Zionism” means to them, as we will see in Chapter IV. This is one reason that I have, as I’ve continued on with this work, moved away from using the term at all, adopting broader Anarchist phrasing of opposition to the *State* of Israel, not necessarily to stateless “Zionist” endeavors of migration, that in some cases (though certainly not all), were conducted peacefully, lawfully, and symbiotically during the *Yishuv* period. Clearly, however, there has always been an imperialist, colonialist and racist strain of Zionism, which rose to the forefront and became the most notorious representative of that term—particularly as the wars of 1947–49 were underway, as evidenced by the terrorist activities of Irgun, then Stern and Lehi cells.

Abdel-Nour (2015) reinforced the principle of sharing the narratives of the creation of the State of Israel from the perspective of both Palestinians and Israeli. Abdel-Nour noted that, through Palestinian eyes, Israeli history is one that reels from the “*Nakbah*,” itself, in which Palestinian land was lost to or, rather, *taken* during the wars of 1947–49. by those who would become Israelis. He considers this underlying theme of the Palestinian narrative of the conflict(s). Abdel-Nour suggested three primary “moral” and “reasonable” arguments for why

what Israel did was inherently and undeniably unjust from a Palestinian perspective. In order to move forward to either a one-state, two-state or federated state, both sides will need to acknowledge the legitimate and painful grievances of one another, an approach proved valuable in other historical conflict situations as well, as we will see in the research of Cynthia Cockburn and Donna Hicks. For the purposes and context of this dissertation, the relevant approach and means of doing this is the use of face-to-face gatherings and study groups.

Dialogue groups. Amihai (2013) asserted that dialogue groups “do not lead to a particular and known political solution.” (para. 18). Instead, he says, they develop “a more encompassing perception that enables us to cope and fosters a deeper, more accurate and comprehensive view of reality” (para. 18). Amihai said that the question of the true purpose of dialogue groups had plagued him for years. After engaging in one such group for a year and a half, he felt the need to embark on an exploration and discussion of what the true purpose, implications and benefits of such groups are. These insights, he says, “are essentially the result of my participation in the Olive Tree program . . . and other dialogue groups” (para. 2).

Referring to the role of dialogue in what he termed “the Israeli Reality,” Amihai (2013) stated that

the main significance of the dialogue groups for Israelis and Palestinians is that they build the capacity to encompass other groups in the society. This fosters the ability to understand and relate to other groups as they are, without denial or misperception. This enables us to consider the existence, desires and interests of other groups. It also includes the ability to better understand the place from which the other’s opinion stems. (para. 4)

He described an experience at a meeting “led by a radical anti-Israeli group” (Amihai, 2013, para. 5) when the Nazi Holocaust was downplayed. He “felt that hatred of Israel in the debate hall was huge, one-sided and one-dimensional” (para. 5) even while he was on the same side of opposing Israeli policy and practice. He noted that because of the interaction through

face-to-face dialogue, there were Palestinians who stood up and defended his right and voice to challenge things that diminished the historical reality of the Nazi Holocaust and its victims.

Dialogue groups also allow tough questions to be asked, Amihai (2013) explained.

Similar to the process of academic study, which often breaks down myths about the historical narrative and ownership of “the truth,” in the process of dialogue, participants learn to deal with the contradictions and conflicts of identity that exist within and between the narratives of the various groups. At the end of the process, it seems that the experience actually reinforces identity and does not weaken it. (para. 6)

In the end, as Amihai (2013) saw it, dialogue groups create a moderating influence and personal rapport that nothing else seems to even come close to replicating, so long as participants “avoid creating an illusion or to romanticize any given political situation” (para. 11). Amihai concluded that there should be no delusions that one person alone can find a solution to the conflict. Instead, the dialogue itself should be seen as a learning process, and through that process, an “excellent, empowering and important tool for development and learning” (para. 18).

This fundamental lesson is the biggest take-away from the article, in terms of how it applies to the Hashlamah Project. In almost a Zen-like way, we have to look for the process as the solution—akin to the notion of the journey as the destination—rather than trying to assume we can come up with all the answers as part of a plan or strategy. Solutions are revealed through *doing* not through planning or theorizing. This introduces the relevance of relational leadership.

Relational Leadership

As another leadership method relevant to the work in this study, relational leadership can employ a variety of media tools to trigger empathy as a way of helping one understand and impart the position of the other—key to the work of the Hashlamah Project. Relational leadership emerged from dealing with very complex situations, such as those faced in the Hashlamah Project’s work. Relational leadership is a relational process of people working together to accomplish change to benefit the common positive goal, or the common good. It is a model that emphasizes leadership

effectiveness centered on the ability of the leader to create positive relationships within an organization. This inclusive approach acknowledges the diverse talents of individual members of a group and trusts the process to bring about the necessary changes group members agree to work toward.

Relational leadership focuses on five concepts which govern relationships between people who have united in order to bring about positive change. Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2009) mapped out those concepts of relational leadership as purpose, inclusion, empowerment, ethics, and process.

Relational leadership is a relatively new term in leadership scholarship. As such, the meaning of the term is somewhat open to interpretation, but the three defining features of this model are: it is designed for contemporary groups; it is aspirational in the sense that it does not describe leadership in all groups; and it is vision-driven rather than position-driven, meaning its ultimate goal is to unite people in achieving a shared vision rather than providing titles and creating a hierarchy of positions.

Relational leadership emphasizes working toward a common goal and bringing about positive change. This stands in stark contrast to a one-person vision, projected onto a group by an individual member. Instead, it is a socialized vision, one that all members of a group can relate to and help create. In relational leadership there is an emphasis on inclusion that involves making every member of the group feel welcome, as well as equal, comfortable, and heard. This model values equal participation, an important aspect of inclusion. Komives et al. (2009) noted this, saying that “individuals are important because they concurrently represent and influence the whole” (p. 109).

Relational leadership emphasizes the importance in the inner workings of groups, meaning “how the group goes about being a group, remaining a group, and accomplishing a group’s purposes. . . . how the group makes decisions, and how the group handles the tasks related to its mission and

vision” (Komives et al., 2009, p. 132). Relational leadership includes valuing individuality and diversity. This means being able to look at a situation from multiple perspectives, maintaining respect for others, and listening with empathy and inclusion. Acting inclusively can even apply to those outside of a group. Relational leadership emphasizes empowerment and creating an environment conducive to group learning, which in turn allows all members to recognize that they have a right and even responsibility to take ownership in the actions and interworking of the group. A leader’s individual power is not as strong as the power which lies in the group as a whole, and this group-based power should be shared with members who do not hold a formal position with an official title. This relates to the fact that “power over [autocratic approaches]” is less productive than “power with [collaborative approaches]” and “power alongside [collegial approaches]” (Komives et al., 2009, p. 116). Furthermore, those who do, in fact, have formal positions with official titles have a responsibility to “empower others to do and to be their best” (Komives et al., 2009, p. 184). In other words, helping members reach their full potentials as group members is a goal that leaders of a group should take on.

The final important part of this aspect of the relational leadership model is self-empowerment. As mentioned previously, it is important for each person to recognize they have a right and even responsibility to take ownership in all that the group is doing. Relational leadership emphasizes ethics implying that it is a model dedicated to virtue, morality, and values, all reducing down to a pursuit of that which is good in nature.

This model follows “rules or standards that govern behavior,” (Toffler, as cited in Komives et al., 2009, p. 126) attempting to pursue what is right as much as possible. Komives et al. (2009) stated that “our challenge today is to close the gap between our expectations of ethical leadership and the reality of frequent breaches of ethical conduct of our leaders.” (p. 129). Leaders can begin working

toward closing this gap by taking responsibility of their own actions, living the values of their organizations in day to day life, so as to “model the way” for others to follow. Relational leadership in practice can be inferred from a number of documentaries I consulted.

The documentary *Encounter Point* (Avni & Bacha, 2006) showed how face-to-face relational leadership and activism between people who have lost everything can change everything through triggering empathy. One Palestinian in the documentary said, upon meeting an Israeli, “I’ve been looking hard for an Israeli who seeks peace, who wants to live together.” The Israeli responded: “There are many, they’re just afraid to come.” This response set the stage for *Encounter Point* thematically and highlights the core issue in this dissertation. The hurdle is less to trigger empathy with the plight of the other when it comes to evoking empathy *from* Palestinians towards Israelis, or Jews in general, but instead to help the oppressed understand that they do have would-be allies and accomplices on the other side of the metaphorical and literal wall—they just must be taught how to confront and overcome the fears that keep them from acting on their empathy. While the focus is indeed on the Palestinian struggle for liberation and self-determination, one key aspect of this theme is the opposition to the State of Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people, from dissidents within Israeli-Jewish (and global Jewish) ranks.

Another Jewish participant in the face-to-face meetings in *Encounter Point*, noted that by being there, he represented “all Jews” in a sense. He said that he “carries all the Jewish people” on his back. This perspective is key to Hashlamah Project Study Circles. The emphasis on face-to-face engagements in *Encounter Point*—while a meeting place for those who have suffered loss—is key to the work of the Hashlamah Project, related to the theme of fear and overcoming distrust.

On Orientalism, a documentary about Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Said, Jhally, & Talreja, 1998), followed much the same path as the book it was based on. The importance of that documentary was in making the original thickly referenced study accessible to a broader audience, so as to trigger relational empathy. Said (1979a) had examined the way in which the West observes, conceptualizes and imagines "the Arabs," and how this perpetuates inequality and oppression. He showed how this imagining misinformed opinions, perspectives and politics on Israel-Palestine. Said noted that the Western Orientalist perspective of the Middle East is one that frames, fetishizes and imagines the region as a place of mystery, but at the same time violence, villains and terrorists. Underlying and permeating it all is a strong, even all-powerful influence of Islamic fundamentalism. Said unpacked these views and excavated the intellectual roots of this Orientalism as being rooting imperial conquest stemming from the 18th century. Finally, Said advanced the thesis that if we are to move forward in the 21st century, Orientalism must be destroyed. But before that can happen, it must be confronted, and those who hold these perceptions—whether consciously or unconsciously (in the collective subconscious of the West), must be intelligently confronted and their views, debunked. In this way leaders must face the opposition, ostracism and professional threats to their careers and persevere in spite of them to trigger empathy for the perceived "other."

Ronit Avni's and Julia Bacha's (2009) documentary, *Budrus*, illustrated the approach of *doing* and *acting in the moment* rather than planning and strategizing. The film looked at a West Bank town's responses and emotional reactions to the construction of Israel's security barrier wall. The town was going to be essentially encircled by the wall, causing the small community of only 1,500 to lose 300 acres and 1000s of olive trees crucial to their economy. In *Budrus*, Ayed Morrar, a member of the Fatah party, discussed nonviolent resistance to the wall. Morrar left his

comfortable job at the Palestinian Authority, finding that his approach conflicted with the approach of the party, and held a town-hall meeting. He asked all to attend, whether Palestinian or Israeli. Together, they formed a grassroots movement under the banner of the phrase “We Can Do It!” Much to widespread surprise—including Morrar’s—this nonviolent movement not only defended the land that was being encroached upon, through their efforts they actually expanded the town’s territory.

Grassroots Activism

Relational leadership can blend into grassroots activism which is perhaps the most common third-party descriptor of the Hashlamah Project’s work. Grassroots activism is a method of campaigning for a cause that the activist or activists feel strongly about. A grassroots movement uses the people as the basis for a political or economic movement. Grassroots movements and organizations utilize collective action from the local level to effect change at the local, regional, national, or international level. Grassroots movements are associated with bottom-up, rather than top-down decision making, and are sometimes considered more natural or spontaneous than more traditional power structures.

Grassroots activists are often at the completely opposite end of the political spectrum from those in power. But their campaigns are often surprisingly effective in making a change. At its most basic level, grassroots activism is a group of people who feel strongly enough about an issue to actively campaign to make a difference. Grassroots activism relies on the basic rights to freedom of speech and expression by individuals when it comes to trying to make a change to a particular issue. This type of activism is not controlled by any particular political party. They are an independent group of people who feel strongly about a certain issue and are willing to put in the effort to affect a change on the issue they are concerned about.

Since the early 1900s, grassroots movements have been widespread both in the United States and in other countries. Major examples include parts of the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, Brazil's land equity movement of the 1970s and beyond, the Chinese rural democracy movement of the 1980s, and the German peace movement of the 1980s.

A strong illustrative example of grassroots activism used to protest the Israeli apartheid state, is seen in Bacha and Wingert-Jabi's (2012) documentary, *My Neighbourhood—The Human Impact of Settlements in Sheikh Jarrah*. It followed Mohammed El Kurd, a Palestinian teenager, through the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. El Kurd's family is one of many who have been forced to share their community with Israeli settlers. The film told the bizarre tale of Mohammed growing up in the middle of this tension with his neighbors. It looked at the forced "legal" evictions of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah—a phenomenon for which the neighborhood has gained international notoriety among human rights and social justice activists. Specifically, the documentary examined the nefarious ways in which settlers have used the legal system to evict Palestinians from their houses in Sheikh Jarrah. The documentary did not, however, paint a grim view of all Israeli Jews, and therein lies its relevance as a solution. Instead, it also looked at the Jewish activists standing against not only the settlers, but also against the State itself. The documentary spent considerable time portraying the strong and relatively widespread support among the Israeli Left, including fairly radical support. It journeyed with Israelis who dissent not only against the settlers, but as one activist explained, against the State which supports settlers and empowers their criminal activity.

The documentary showed not only that there is relatively strong Israeli support for the Palestinian people among the Left, but that, as great as the numbers are which turn out at

demonstrations, there is an even larger silent mass of Jews on the Israeli left which is terrified and terrorized by the State, which compels them to stay quiet in whole or in part.

My Neighborhood showed the power of bridge-building through Jewish dissent against the Israeli State, demonstrating how Palestinians gain an understanding of the nuance and differences of opinion among Jews broadly, and Israeli Jews specifically. Moreover, the documentary showed that while there were many failures over the course of the two years following the initial phase of the film, the activists were successful in bringing at least a temporary halt to the land-grab in Sheikh Jarrah, and showcasing the perspective of the disenfranchised to spur protest, adding the point of view that one should protest Israel's exercises in apartheid.

In *+972 Mag*, Noy (2015), examined the work of Salah Diab, one of the leaders of the struggle against expulsions of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. Noy is a voice against the Occupation, which serves as the main strategy to enforce apartheid. Noy reported that Diab had been released from a five-month jail sentence, for a crime, which he (Diab) maintains he had no part in. Noy set the stage for Sheikh Jarrah upon his return. He described that the police had worked in concert with the settlers in order to give them both the force of law and the coercive force of armed security, backed by the State. Diab heard noises outside of his house. He went to investigate, bringing his camera, and found a crowd of settlers and police officers. Diab was arrested and interrogated about a beating of a settler. The police accused him of being one of the men in a video, but the entire video was shot at a time when Diab had an alibi that was well known to all. It took two years for Diab to finally be brought to trial. At that trial, officers who knew Diab well from his frequent presence at Sheikh Jarrah protests "told lie after lie" (Diab, as cited in Noy, 2015, para. 5) to support the trumped-up charges. Even though the video did not

show any of the attackers clearly, and even though Diab had an alibi, he was the only individual detained and charged, based on allegations that he was one of the six attackers.

Noy (2015) wrote: “As strange as it may sound, anyone who knows about how the police behave in East Jerusalem knows that Diab’s story doesn’t sound so out of the ordinary” (para. 7). Noy added that the East Jerusalem police are notorious for their extreme violence against peaceful protesters. Diab appealed the District Court’s decision, but he was eventually convicted anyway, on the basis that he was “tall and skinny” like one of the people in the grainy video. Noy chronicled Diab’s time and experiences in jail, as well as the reaction upon returning home.

Noy (2015) reported that several years before, around the time of Jewish celebration of Purim, some settlers “put speakers in the middle of the street and began singing songs of praise for Baruch Goldstein” (para. 17)—the Israeli who had murdered 29 Muslim worshippers at Hebron’s Cave of the Patriarchs in 1994. This act of harassment set the backdrop of what would be the eviction of one, then multiple families from that area. Such religious timing and coinciding with a clearly political, terroristic act, shows how key religion is both in creating the problem, and in defusing it. To time this with Purim is to compare Palestinians, broadly, to the Biblical villain Haman and his forces. Such a comparison has no religious basis, but instead exploits religion to legitimize terrorism and supremacist politics. This is at the heart of why the work of the Hashlamah Project—work within *religious* spheres—is so important in dismantling the propaganda of the Israeli State.

Noy (2015) asked Diab if, in the face of these evictions, the weekly protests in the neighborhood actually changed anything? Diab’s response was direct and strong:

Whoever says that our protests didn’t change anything is blind. First of all, even a smile and the love between us is enough. It gives power. What brings someone here from Tel Aviv in the rain, cold or snow? Love. And he who is just never breaks. It is difficult and can take a lot of time, but in the Quran it says that Allah is with those who have patience.

Look at how your prime ministers fall prey to their own lies. This state is based on a lie, on theft. This will be its downfall. (as cited in Noy, 2015, para. 21)

Diab noted, as other reviewed works have, the presence of Jewish protesters and social justice activists who stand side by side with their Palestinian neighbors, to denounce and oppose the oppressive acts of the State. Encouraged by the fact that Palestinian protest has moved Jewish hearts as well towards justice, Diab said,

I have no words to describe how I feel about our Jewish friends who come here every week. Love. Excitement. They are the ones who hold us here. They give us a lot of strength. I am sure that because of you, the authorities haven't kicked out more people. (as cited in Noy, 2015, para. 24)

He further noted the “insulating” factor that their privilege extended to the people they are standing in solidarity with, much as was the case in Selma and other massive civil rights protests in the American south during the 1960s.

Jewish authors like Chomsky and Pappé are exactly the sorts of a collaborative allies (or “accomplices” as I prefer), that the well-known Palestinian Human Rights Activist Omar Barghouti—researcher and co-founder of the BDS (Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions) movement for Palestinian rights says the Palestinian people need to break through into the consciousness and conscience of open-minded Israelis and Jews abroad. Barghouti (2014) discussed and highlighted the importance of Israeli and global Jewish allies in his article “Opting for Justice: The Critical Role of Anti-Colonial Israelis in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement,” These are Jews and Israelis who “opt for justice” and, in doing so, play a critical role in the BDS movement, which while grassroots in nature and origins, clearly has vast overlap with intellectual leadership and scholars participating in the academic aspect of the Israeli boycott.

Barghouti (2014) called these “principled Israeli anti-colonialists [who are] committed to *full* Palestinians rights,” in contrast to the general Israeli Left, which often seems to want

conditional recognition of basic, innate human rights for the Palestinian people. Barghouti noted that while these “fully-committed [Jews] have played a small role in the movement” it is a role that is “significant” (p. 408) both for Palestinians and Israelis alike. Anti-colonial Israelis “realize that Israelis cannot possibly have normal lives without first shedding their colonial character” (p. 410). For Palestinians, the call for human rights is coming from within the borders of the oppressive power structure, depriving a people of their rights. This argues, then, that the truth of the resistance to that oppression is self-evident—so much so that those who would naturally be conditioned to accept it, socially, have retreated from the colonial argument, enterprise and endeavor entirely—even setting up camp with those resisting it from the oppressed community itself.

In fact, Barghouti (2014) devoted much of his paper to calling out the Israeli Left, suggesting a subconscious, unspoken motto of “If you can’t beat it [BDS] ‘hijack it!’” He suggests that the Left is using BDS as a “weapon” purported to “save Israel, essentially as an apartheid exclusivist state” (p. 410). Slogans employed by Leftist apologists include “Boycott the occupation, not Israel,” or “we are against Israeli policies, not against Israel”—nuances he saw as bizarre, and akin to “be(ing) opposed to South African apartheid without being ‘against South Africa’” as a government and State. Far from making the comparison to South Africa alone, he also highlights the same with respect to opposing and boycotting Sa`udi `Arabia for the oppression of women. Such opposition, he asserts, is by nature “against Sa`udi `Arabia” (p. 413) as an entity.

Still, Barghouti (2014) made an essential point that a nuanced clarification could be made—though this is hardly what has been stated by those splitting hairs and trying to hijack the BDS movement. He stated: “BDS targets Israel as a colonial state that violates international law

and Palestinian rights but not the Israeli *people* per se.” This, he explains “would be more accurate in describing the BDS movement’s goals” (p. 412).

There are a few things that, in my view, bear commenting on, with respect to this article. The issues are somewhat problematic in the sense that they do not acknowledge the complexity and diversity of Israeli Jewish demographics and ancestry. Specifically, the use of the term *colonial* by Barghouti is both accurate and, yet, in some cases inaccurate. Overall, and broadly speaking, there can be little debate that the term is correct. The Israeli State and many driving forces within the *Yishuv* were colonial in nature. There is no possible way to intelligently defend a position that would hold the settlements, as an idea, and even institutional tool, as anything but colonial in nature.

Israeli society today is a melting pot of many cultures, not just those descending from European Jewry. The majority of Israeli Jews I know (many 100s), have at least one *Mizrachi*, Middle Eastern Jewish grandparent who fled their countries of origin for Israel because of persecution, and after the establishment of the state. Many are Ethiopian and have very different attitudes towards the Israeli government and even IDF, the Israel Defense Force, in which they are forced by the coercion of the state to participate in. Others have a grandparent who was native to the region, in long-standing Jewish communities there. Still others fled brutal Nazi-funded pogroms in predominantly Muslim regions, as in the case of the *Farhud* in Iraq (Yehuda & Moreh, 2010) closely tied to Al-Amin al-Hussein’s brother’s activities. For these exiles, there was no intention of colonialism, nor any of the dominant European strains of “Zionist” thought and inspiration, but within Israel, the later result of them benefiting from Israeli-Jewish privilege was nevertheless left standing when the proverbial dust settled.

Barghouti (2014) is absolutely correct to damn the intentions and actions of the State, but demographically, there are many nuances that persistent use of these terms overlooks. I have seen firsthand how this keeps many on the Israeli Left from fully participating in the struggle for Palestinian liberation. It might seem a small point, but for *Mizrachim*, or Israeli Jews of mixed Mizrahi ancestry, it is looked at as a broader issue of what I have anecdotally heard summed up with the frustration: “Everyone hates us; we are from this region directly, and we have no other safe haven.”

I believe it is important, and sometimes overlooked for opponents of the Israeli State to emphasize that not everyone came to the region for the same reasons, nor do all remain there for the same reasons. Similarly, it is important to look at the differences in settlements and the people who are there. There is little question that the settlements are illegal and an obstacle to peace. But there are some who migrate to the settlements not for colonial intentions, but for jobs. Many in the Israeli Hashlamah Project chapters have referred to the Israeli economy as a “house of cards” and “propped up” by the military industrial complex. This is one reason why war is perpetual—because without war and the influx of United States tax dollars, the Israeli economy would be unsustainable.

Many Israelis know this and flock to some settlements for work. In some cases, there are even Thai workers who live in the settlements who have no interest in the intentions or designs of the Israeli State, or the religious Right with regards to the settlements. None of this should be looked at as a justification for the settlements. They are in every way illegitimate. At the same time, glossing over these distinctions creates some problems, particularly with building alliances and attracting would-be activists into the fold.

In 2015, an interpersonal discussion took place—akin to study circle dialogues—between Omar Barghouti and Eyal Sivan, directed and moderated by Anne de Jong, at the University of Amsterdam, as documented in *The Politics of Cultural Freedom* (Barghouti et al., 2015). The discussion, organized by Palestine Link, Gate 48, in collaboration with an individual scholar, aimed at disseminating academic information so that it becomes available to a broader public. The primary intention of the discussion was to focus on what kinds of interactions there are, and on the academic and cultural boycott of Israel, while facilitating critical discussion of Israel-Palestine related politics of culture, “beyond good or bad.”

In the discussion, Barghouti et al. (2015) noted two aspects of BDS. First is the basic right, the minimal rights of the Palestinian people, for which there can be no negotiation. These are human rights and must not be held up to a democratic vote, just as issues like slavery or any other matter of freedom and personal autonomy should not be left up to the opinion of the majority. Instead, these basic human rights include ending the occupation of the West Bank, ending the system of discrimination and apartheid in Israel proper, and affirming the right of return for millions of Palestinians in exile.

The second aspect of BDS involves the tactics employed by the movement, and these, Barghouti (2014) explained, are very much negotiable. These are the strategies employed or to be employed for the purposes of reaching those rights. Tactics are negotiable. Rights are not. One particularly interesting point that Barghouti brought forth ties this panel discussion thematically to some of the earlier readings above. He mentioned a Mossad leader who commented about how Jewish support for BDS is of paramount concern for Israel. The Israeli government, he explained, sees this as a grave danger to the State, due to the many layers of implications embedded in Jewish support for BDS. Barghouti also clarified an

often-misunderstood issue, arguing that Israel is an apartheid state, akin to, though very different from other apartheid states throughout history. When one hears the word “apartheid,” one often thinks of the former South African regime. But apartheid is defined by the United Nations. It does *not* mean that all apartheid governments will be identical to the South African variant. Barghouti commenting on the differences and similarities between Israeli and South African apartheid noted: “they’re not twins, but they’re related” (p. 411).

The United Nations uses an internationally agreed definition of apartheid: It is the systematic, legalized and institutionalized oppression against racial or racialized groups with the purpose of establishing and maintaining a dominant racial regime (United Nations International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, 1973). Apartheid is expressed in a range of institutionalized restrictions and annihilations against a racial or racialized group including murder, arbitrary arrest, establishing ghettos, appropriation of land and other property, curtailing freedom of expression and so on. While all systemic racism does this to an extent, with apartheid these acts are formally adopted as writ of law. It is apartheid, Barghouti (2014), when laws discriminate based on identity. In Israel there are more than 50 such laws that discriminate against non-Jewish citizens.

Drawing the discussion back to BDS, Barghouti (2014) noted that in Israel, academia plays a more significant role in promoting the apartheid system of Israel than it ever did in South Africa. It is academia that argues for and justifies the system of discrimination that gives Israel its national characteristics. For that reason, he asserts BDS must target Israel for boycott, focusing strongly on an academic boycott.

In a panel discussion (Barghouti et al., 2015), Sivan came from a Jewish-Israeli perspective, arguing for the legitimacy and nonhypocrisy of Israeli Jews who stand in solidarity

with the Palestinian people to “boycott from within” and to promote the boycott of Israel academically. Sivan was chiefly concerned with explaining the noncontradiction of being an Israeli academic and calling for the academic boycott of Israel.

After some considerable discussion in the panel, de Jong directed the conversation to questions of contention that are raised against the idea of BDS. Barghouti answered drawing the analogy back to South Africa. He noted that the most popular contention against BDS, that there are much more egregious oppressors and nations, did not dissuade South African boycotters, who admitted—as Desmond Tutu did—that there were more oppressive governments even within the African continent. None of that, he had argued, delegitimized the boycott of South Africa, although the same argument was a common diversion used by the apartheid regime in its propaganda.

Pedagogy of Dangerous Memories

Whereas the BDS movement targets the Israeli State and its institutions, transformations are also crucial on the side of the Palestinian people, in particular the economic, social, and psychological healing from decades of Israeli politics of starvation and dehumanization. This pertains to the international movement for the decolonization of education and policies and how they are relayed as “dangerous memories”—ones disruptive to the status quo or hegemonic culture. Turner and Shweiki’s (2014), *Decolonizing Palestinian Political Economy: De-development and Beyond* (2014), is a political economy analysis of the Palestinian people as a whole—as a unity. It looked at those living within the occupied West Bank, as well as the Gaza Strip and annexed East Jerusalem, as well as abroad, as one single people. Together with these obvious Palestinian demographics, Turner and Shweiki also consider those Palestinians living as citizens within the whole of Israel, and refugees living in neighboring states.

The work rejects the conventional approach to the conflict(s) and crisis(es) that looks at the Palestinian people in chunks—divided falsely along political borders and boundaries imposed upon them. It further rejects the division of “Arab-Israeli” and “Bedouin.” This resonates with my own political views and anarchism, which acknowledges peoplehood, but not artificial political borders. Turner and Shweiki (2014) sought to intellectually reunite the Palestinian people as part of a single historical political-economy narrative. That narrative is one of a single people, who have been and continue to be dispossessed, disenfranchised and disarticulated.

Decolonization also involves critical reflections on and healing from the scars of the past. Zembylas, and Bekerman (2008), explored the meanings and implications of what the authors regard as “dangerous memories” (p. 125) relative to past traumatic history in both Israel and Cyprus. The authors define *dangerous memories* as those which disrupt the status quo in which existing group-based identities are maintained, unquestioningly and without being critically challenged or examined. Their intentions are to educate educators, focusing on informing academia and helping scholars and intellectuals recognize the potential of dangerous memories in offering hope. What they meant, essentially, is that discussion of memories—history and identity—can set the stage for meaningful and informative intellectual discussion and academic informing. To illustrate their thesis, they narrated two stories from ethnographic studies on trauma and memory in Israel and Cyprus. They argued that the two different stories suggest that collective memories of such historical trauma are not transmitted in a straightforward and obvious way, through the generations. Finally, they discussed the potential for developing “a pedagogy of dangerous memories” (p. 130). This, they assert, can be done through focusing on

the implications of dangerous memories and the potential for creating “new solidarities” (p. 125) without overwriting past traumatic memories.

To continue with literature that presents real world solutions, Hajjar (1997) addressed some of the legal implications of decolonization, by speaking to the “globalizing scope of human rights” (p. 473) as this relates to the work of lawyers. The author focused on lawyers who have worked in the Israeli military court system in the Occupied Territories. The article is transnational in perspective, both because it deals with two entities—Israel and Palestine—and because it focuses on the international network of human rights activism as well as lawyers working towards the same end through legal channels and litigation. Hajjar discussed the political motivations that inspire lawyers to get involved in this sort of work. She compared the legal and extralegal strategies pursued by lawyers working in this way and looked at the influence of human rights work on the “politics of lawyering” (p. 473), particularly with regard to how this relates to Israel and Palestine.

Hajjar (1997) argued that globally, lawyers are often key to advancing political causes. The concept and phrase “cause lawyering” (p. 473) is a reference to the “extralegal engagements of politically motivated lawyers” (p. 473). In juxtaposition to “conventional” (p. 474) or “client lawyering,” (p. 474) Hajjar notes that cause lawyering applies “professional skills and services to transform some aspect of the status quo” (p. 474). Even conceptually, she explained, there are “agency, motivation and social identifications [as well as] . . . political relations, and goals” (p. 474) implicit in cause lawyering. The very notion of “cause” implies agency, motivation, social identifications, political relations, and goals. This serves as “opportunities for intervention” and may change relative to redefined circumstances in the course of any struggle. Hajjar notes that “cause lawyering often is organized and operationalized within national

boundaries” (p. 474), but there are many who strive to make even regional, individual issues more global in perspective. This is perhaps nowhere more so the case than with Israel-Palestine issues and struggles for social justice and liberation.

Hajjar (1997) noted, “Human rights, as both a normative discourse and a form of international politics, provides a global perspective particularly relevant to the study of cause lawyering” (p. 474). It is one of only a handful of professional approaches to changing the world for the better through one’s work, “tantamount to human rights work of some kind” (p. 474). Moreover, human rights work is in large part done through collaboration with lawyers.

Facing Fear

All of the above activist solutions have very high stakes and are risky for those involved. The background review of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict culminates in research that is broad, but applicable to the concerns of activists working within these circles. Fear and threats of violence, terrorism or even prison or political assassination (as in the previously mentioned case of Yitzak Rabin) are all concerns that come to the forefront of activism that involves Jews and Muslims generally, and Israelis and Palestinians specifically. These threats might come from actual terrorist groups, and radical religious leaders from either relevant religion, or they might come from the state apparatus itself. In either event, the works that follow serve as a brief introduction to some of the literature on persevering in high-risk activism, in the face of threats and fear that can provide a frame for the kinds of issues and experiences that might emerge in the action project with the participants.

Moïsi (2010) investigated the impact of globalization, and how the contemporary geopolitics is characterized by what he calls a clash of emotions. Moïsi argued that the West itself is almost completely consumed and dominated by a sense of division borne from fear. He

explained that with Muslims a sense of hatred is born from humiliation. His work suggested an inextricable link between fear of perceived or real threats, and hatred that those threats stem from. That hatred itself originates from a sense of humiliation, and thus estrangement. Ironically, the threats that are relevant to this dissertation are those that arise as a result of activism purporting to end that estrangement and humiliation. For there to be a solution to this situation, that sense of humiliation must be confronted and reversed. In the methodology Chapter, III, I will talk about humiliations and violations of dignity.

Particularly relevant to this discussion is the methodology of Hicks (2011) on the role of dignity in conflict. Using many anecdotal examples Hicks illustrated how fear can escalate mutual demonization, whereas one way to restore humanity can be the acknowledgment of each other's human worth and dignity as human beings. Hicks explained that dignity, or the pursuit of it, is a primary motivating force behind all human interaction. Because it is so central to all human interaction, when it is violated the response can result in hatred, aggression, and even violence. Hicks noted that few actually have a firm understanding of the importance of a sense of dignity, and thus these sorts of violations occur with tragic frequency, giving rise to widespread violence. Conversely, when people are treated with dignity, they connect and overcome past estrangement.

This is clearly key to Hashlamah Project work, not only in our normal modes of operation, but also in how we approach facing fear. To face fear, we must understand its root cause, and Hicks (2011) eloquently explains and identifies the cause of the violence that causes fear as so often being borne from a violation of dignity. Hicks proposed that her model of dignity can be used as a model for resolving a wide array of conflicts. This raises the question—and presents the answer—should we respond to threats of violence with more fear, which will only further

estrangle us and compound pre-existing violations of dignity in some (but not all) cases where threats are present in this activism? Hicks suggested that the answer lies not in fear, but in acknowledgement and giving dignity to those who might otherwise be feared.

In order to acknowledge and show dignity we must allow ourselves to be vulnerable and we must approach others' vulnerabilities with empathy and nonjudgment. *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy* (Mackenzie, Rogers, & Dodds, 2013b), explored further dimensions of the concept of vulnerability. The book, overall, implied that dignity is central to the very concept of ethics. In their introductory essay to the volume, Mackenzie, Rogers, and Dodds (2013a) argued compellingly for the centrality of the concept of vulnerability. They noted that there are essentially both universal and specific meanings to the word. Referring to writers such as Judith Butler, they noted "an important motivation of theorists who highlight the universality of inherent ontological vulnerability is to focus attention on the need to reframe some of the founding assumptions of contemporary moral and political theory" (p. 4). They looked further at Goodin's (1985) use of the term *focusing* "on the contingent susceptibility of particular persons or groups to specific kinds of harm or threat by others" (Mackenzie et al., 2013a, p. 6). They proposed three kinds of vulnerability. The first are those universal vulnerabilities that are intrinsic to the human condition. The second is situational vulnerability, which arises from context. Finally, there is pathogenic vulnerability, which stems from situational vulnerabilities that arise from significant oppression or injustice, or as they explain, "when a response intended to ameliorate vulnerability has the paradoxical effect of exacerbating existing vulnerabilities or generating new ones" (p. 9). Thus, the methodology of the dissertation project includes a way to invite people to talk about fear and vulnerability for the purposes of promoting dignity and empathy.

Mackenzie (2013) also looked at “The Importance of Relational Autonomy and Capabilities for an Ethics of Vulnerability.” Critiquing another researcher who wrote about vulnerability—Fineman (2010)—she suggested a more refined account of relational autonomy. In her view, vulnerability and autonomy that are not opposites but mutually essential elements of what she considers the natural state of our existence.

Many of the essays in Mackenzie et al. (2013b), look at vulnerability in a way that is intended to address other moral issues, which is the key relevance to the Hashlamah Project. For example, Formosa (2013) explained that “there is no reason why vulnerability cannot play an important role in Kantian ethics” (p. 95). He looked at theories related to recognition, and how that ties in, noting that scholars such as Anderson and Honneth (2005) demonstrated how, to be fully realized, exercising autonomy requires the recognition of others for such exercises. He thus argued that autonomy and vulnerability to others, are naturally and essentially entwined. In this way, it is essential to consider how this vulnerability and recognition is key to reconciliation and thus cornerstone to the Hashlamah Project. Similarly, vulnerability is entwined with the concept and experience of facing our fear. In this way, the Hashlamah Project study circle sessions open members up to the perceived other, and at the same time, make them vulnerable in the broader sense of making oneself vulnerable by engaging in this sort of activism at all.

Just as Hicks (2011) moved from humiliation to dignity, the theme of vulnerability, Cockburn’s (1998) *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* examined integrated vulnerability and common humanity as women. Cockburn’s work provided ways of thinking about dialogue across borders. She looked at a variety of spaces where people are engaging in peace work within areas of conflict. In particular, she examined examples in Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine, as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina. This work is perhaps

the most directly relevant to my overarching thesis question in this dissertation, as Cockburn asked how those doing such work fill the dangerous space between them “with words instead of bullets?” (1998, p. 1). She resolved this among women’s groups she worked with in a way that relates to the earlier discussion on countering the reproduction of dangerous memories (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008). Historical enemies can rewrite history together in a way all can live with. Also, they can refrain from speaking from any other position than the impersonal self. Cockburn talks about “transversal politics,” (1998, p. 8) a term to conceptualize a democratic practice of talking across difference—what she also calls “a practice of peace” (1998, p. 8).

In *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology*, Frank (2010) advanced both a theory of how stories shape us as well as a method for analyzing said stories. In fitting with the approach of Hashlamah dialogue, Frank argued that we think with stories, and are even born into stories. Thus, to truly understand one another, we must be able to listen to the stories of the perceived “other.” Frank coined the term “socio-narratology” to explain how these stories form from our societies and ethnic groups, as well as correspondingly help to form them.

In *Empathy: Why It Matters, and How to Get It*, Krznaric (2014) asserted that human brains are literally wired for social connection and empathy. Apathetic approaches to society and politics, he argued, are contrary to our very nature. Krznaric presented six habits of highly empathic people. They are those who he evaluates as able to connect in incredible ways, thereby making the world (and in the process, themselves), the better. Krznaric asserted that empathy is “the art of stepping imaginatively into the shoes of another person, understanding their feelings and perspectives, and using that understanding to guide your actions” (p. x). Krznaric criticized philosophers and thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, Sigmund Freud, and even contemporarily, Richard Dawkins, for their exclusively individualistic—even apathetic—outlook

on relationship to and need for the perceived other. Drawing on research from psychology, evolutionary biology and neuroscience he argued that we are naturally empathetic and thus need to learn to “switch on [our] empathetic brain” (p. 1) if we are going to solve the problems facing the world, such as prejudice, authority, and interpersonal estrangement. Krznaric suggested that engaging in activities as simple as chatting to strangers, and immersing oneself in someone else’s perspective and experiences, can help build empathy and repair the fissures in a world of estrangement and disconnection. This is at the core of the Hashlamah Project’s work. Krznaric delineated the research and practical approaches—the science even—behind what it is that the Hashlamah Project does.

Conclusion to Chapter II

This review has attempted to integrate intellectual leadership, relational leadership and grassroots initiatives in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territories. I have highlighted risk and fear from within both Palestinian and Israeli circles of resistance. The theme of risk and fear runs through the literature and documentaries reviewed above which examined the complexity of power relations in this struggle as well as the obstacles that stand in the way of mutual understanding.

Intellectual leadership was examined in relation to a historical-critical reassessment of Israeli nationalistic claims. I looked at the scholarship examining the weaknesses of the mainstream proposals for a two-state solution, versus an inclusive single state, or federation, as well as academic distortions of the history and modern context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Finally, the chapter discussed new theoretical ways to think about Palestinian self-determination. It examined social justice and political opposition to Israeli ethno-nationalism, and activism standing against the apartheid state. Resistance within the context and even borders of Israeli

occupation ties in with relational leadership and grassroots activism. The distinction between peace activism and social justice activism prevailed throughout all of the works examined. No seriously critical academic study of the Israel-Palestine conflict(s) has suggested that peace can be discussed at the negotiating table without justice as the centerpiece. I have had a specific focus on current dialogue, activism and resistance in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territories, with several motifs running through each thematic grouping of multimedia content to be examined. The fundamental constant in all of these, however, is fear—fear of the perceived other, fear of retaliation from enemies of justice and peace, and fear of familial or social ostracism.

Most of the works discussed focused on intellectual leadership—which is consistent with the Hashlamah project’s respect for conversation and the sharing of ideas in looking for solutions—followed up by grassroots initiatives. With a broad critical grounding, they also aimed to understand the complexity of current activism and resistance in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territories. Part of this complexity was seen in the nuance of resistance itself, how nonviolence as a tactic does not decry armed resistance, and how resistance against the Israeli State and its oppression is not simply an act engaged in externally, whether by Palestinians or others, but also internally (by Palestinians and Jews).

Throughout the review, there was a focus on the perspective of perseverance in the resistance. A common reason to be concerned with that is the risk and fear involved in engaging in such work. Unlike much armed conflict, where there is a hope of quick victory and resolution, the evolving approach of Palestinian nonviolent resistance is a long-term strategy with long-term goals, rooted in socio-religious ideas, in many ways. The research and knowledge from

reviewing these works has framed the context of the Hashlamah approach to Israel-Palestine social justice, peace, and reconciliation (in that order).

The emphasis on face-to-face interactions throughout so many of these works reviewed here, further underlines the importance of this approach. While it is common to emphasize that reconciliation between nations is a prerequisite to achieving a sustainable peace, it occurs to me that there are two reconciliations to be concerned with here: one grassroots, happening moment-to-moment, and another, following a peace process. There is agreement, in the literature reviewed, that grassroots, organic reconciliation borne of face-to-face dialogue, is a prerequisite for any true and lasting peace, or the viability of any government peace process. But following that process, there must be a second form of reconciliation. Just as the analogies between Apartheid Israel and Apartheid South Africa were made so eloquently by so many speakers, authors and filmmakers that I have reviewed, the analogy and inspiration for a post-reform reconciliation must also be emphasized. The process of reconciliation in South Africa, through the nation's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was an important process in healing as the new government and nation moved forward from the shadows of apartheid. Some Israeli organizations, like Combatants for Peace (n.d.) and Breaking the Silence (n.d.), are already engaged in an informal, grassroots approach to what was implemented and instituted by the new South African government, following the cessation of the Apartheid regime. A discussion of grassroots reconciliation and formal means of reconciliation, not unlike what these groups are engaged in already (informally), is an area to be addressed as well in the remainder of this dissertation, and with the Hashlamah Study Circles within Israel, as we move forward and discuss viable solutions, both for the Palestinian people and for Israelis who believe in human rights—equal rights—and justice for all.

Chapter III: Methodology, Guiding Questions, and Research Procedures—A Study of Action Research

The research question central to this dissertation is: How can Jewish-Muslim and Israel-Palestine grassroots activism persist in the face of threats to the safety, freedom, and lives of those engaged in acts of sustained resistance? Threats include first and foremost threats to physical safety, but also social threats. The methodology used to answer this question is grounded in the principle of collaborating with those experiencing these risks and threats. In this chapter, the focus is on the relevance of action research as a method to answer the question of sustainability of activism in circumstances of threat. In particular, the relation of the Hashlamah Project as flat organization and participatory action research as something conducive to nonhierarchical organization—self-directed by participants.

The goal of conventional research is to expand the existing knowledge base about a problem or issue, and to generate insights that may be useful in other settings. But action research has another focus entirely: to undertake an empirical study in order to make decisions about specific problems in specific settings. Action research integrates theory and practice in an effort to simultaneously create change and knowledge.

In this context, each Hashlamah circle represents a mini case study. The individual interviews with participants of the different circles described in Chapter IV, act as part of the overarching Hashlamah case study (Yin, 2009) each serving to highlight their specific case as relevant to the general case as a whole. Specifically, the approach of the interviews followed the overarching methodologies of the Hashlamah Project itself. That is to say that first and foremost the Project relies on face-to-face interaction, without the estrangement that seems inherent in online interactions, discussions, and debates. Ideally, and initially, I had planned to travel to the

Hashlamah Project chapters being studied, but due to unforeseeable political circumstances and backlash—perhaps ironically, perhaps inevitably, in that fear and risk are important themes of this study itself—these face-to-face interactions had to be done via Skype sessions.

Reflections on a Pilot Study

This participatory action research expands upon an earlier aforementioned pilot study that I conducted within the borders of the State of Israel in late 2014 (Naziri, 2015). The goal of that study was to reflect on the learning and determine applicability of action research to the intended dissertation, now at hand. As such I “explored, reflected, stepped back, stepped in and stepped back and back in again,” as my then-mentor for the study, Lackovich-Van Gorp, summarized the process.

The broad cultural transformation that the Hashlamah Project seeks to create does not happen across the board in an organization all at once. Instead, it is initiated through the living personal transformation of leaders, and then further on an individual basis from participant to participant. Cultural transformation is by nature an adaptive work. It requires individuals to unlearn assumptions and indoctrination, learning from new, firsthand information in place of these failed assumptions.

More than any other Hashlamah Project chapters, there was an almost uniquely Israeli fear of bringing meetings to fruition within the Jewish State. One participant reflected a widespread apprehensiveness, saying, “once I put out fliers, it hit me: what if people actually show up to these things?” As a result, there was an initial burst of fervor among Israeli supporters, that quickly degenerated into passive verbal support. Each Israeli chapter saw earlier incarnations of itself led by those who quickly gave up. One organizer in Tel Aviv said: “I think

what it really comes down to is that we are all too afraid of Muslims here” (Anonymous, personal communication, November 28).

I tried to dispel this fear, and even note that the fear went both ways. But my Israeli colleague was correct: there was something different about Israeli-Jewish fear of the other that I had not witnessed in Palestinian quarters. There was never a time that I was turned away from a Palestinian home when traveling. I had never found Palestinians anything but curious and overjoyed to discuss my research. There was no fear of me as a Jew, as many in Israel would prejudicially warn me of, nor was there an unwillingness to host me or insistently offer world-famous Palestinian hospitality towards me. It helped, naturally, that I was known and introduced as being highly critical of Israeli policies with respect to war, settlements, and equal rights, and that I did not represent the State of Israel in any way, though Jewishness and Israeli nationalism are often conflated. Even with five years of Arabic under my belt, I am far from fluent in the colloquial Palestinian Arabic of the many different regions. But I understand enough to always catch introductions of me—in Arabic first—that highlight my politics, and note, excitedly, that yes, “he is Jewish!” It would seem that this hospitality is contingent upon those politics—and who could blame any Palestinian for skepticism and caution? But on the Israeli side, there was and is a fear of a different sort. The Tel Aviv organizer described it as paralyzing, and indeed it is.

I had significant time to devise the 2014 study. How would I address the concerns that the Israeli chapters had been voicing already, and most importantly, how would I do so in a way that made participants self-aware of their paralyzing fears and how to overcome them? This led to the idea of a two-part solution:

1. Sit down with chapter participants and assess the demographic composition of the chapters in question, to determine if they are diverse and how to create diverse discussion groups if, when and where they are not.
2. Identify the fears, talk through them, and work together with participants compose working solutions to neutralize those fears.

Upon arrival at Tel Aviv, and, later, Jerusalem, I found what I expected, given the segregation of Israeli society, even in more liberal centers: entirely Jewish study circles. The groups were small, less than a dozen people, as they are in nearly every city where Hashlamah Project Study Circles have formed (though some are quite large). But there was no diversity, aside from amongst *minhagim* (ethno-religious orientations within Judaism) of Jewish participants. Tel Aviv had the typical mix of Ashkenazim with *S'fardic* heritage that always seemed to lose out to the dominant Ashkenazi paradigm.¹³ One Black African Jew was involved, as was a new Ashkenazi immigrant to Israel, who hailed from South Africa. Somewhat surprising to me was the fact that fear of the other did not seem to be any noticeably different between these two, then the general body of the study circle—no more than a dozen in total, on any given occasion. What this amounted to was a study circle that met and discussed progressive, even revolutionary ideas, as well as related history. But they were not actually *doing* any of the engagement that the Hashlamah Project is all about, which is stepping outside of comfort zones, crossing socio-religious borders, collaborating, and even at times cross-pollinating ideas, experiences and practices.

¹³ In Israel and today throughout the world, the dominant *minhag* or “customs” are Germanic or *Ashkenazi Jewish*. *Ashkenazi* and *S'fardic* can be likened to the *mazhab* schools of Islamic thought in Islam, reflecting differences in liturgy and even dietary restrictions during *Pesach*. Perhaps ironically, most Israelis demographically have at least one *S'fardic* grandparent, but the *Ashkenazi* norm—being termed *Ashkenormative* in many of our communities today—still dominates as the default for customs, in and outside of Israel for the most part.

Jerusalem was an even more dire work situation. The fear there was palpable. Study Circle participants were significantly more conservative in their religious views, and even though there is a large Muslim population situated within the city, there seemed to have been no effort made at inviting Muslims to the discussion groups.

After taking account of the demographics of each group before giving the workshops that I had been invited out for, I decided to stir the pot a little. I asked, “Why don’t we just go out and talk to some Muslims?” The looks I received were somewhere between astonished and amused. “I’m serious. Why not? Let’s just go out and talk with people on the street.” No one thought this was a good idea, or even *sane* for that matter. “You don’t just “go out and meet Muslims,” one participant told me, scoffing in an amused way that reminded me of how Americans often assume foreigners just don’t “get it” when they journey to the United States. I asked, “What am I not getting then? What do you think will happen if you go up and talk to random Palestinian strangers?”

The Tel Aviv seminar shaped the parallel session in Jerusalem, during the pilot study. But in Jerusalem there was less scoffing, and more silent looks of nausea when I suggested the “grand conclusion” of Phase 1: “Why not just go out and meet Muslims?”

In Tel Aviv, I made a joke about “pick-up artistry,” but that was not going to go over well in Jerusalem where the demographics were significantly more religiously *orthoprax*.¹⁴ In Tel Aviv, I said something along the lines of,

look, when you are young, you don’t know how to speak with someone you are attracted to. It is because you haven’t tried to engage anyone in that way before. You are scared because there is an unknown, a fear of rejection, humiliation or, in this case, we have a fear of things that might be even worse. But as you get used to talking to people, asking

¹⁴ In Religious Studies, “orthopraxy” is reference to religions or sects that focus on what is deemed correct conduct, both ethical and liturgical, with far less focus on actual beliefs. This is in contrast with *orthodoxy*, which is known for its emphasis on correct *belief*.

them out, you realize that often times you get the answer you wanted just by being willing to ask and engage.

I explained. “If you are paralyzed by fear, you will always lose, you will never get what you want.” One participant, a young man in his early 20s chimed in, “But you do not always get what you want. Sometimes you do get humiliated.” “And so, life goes on,” I rebutted. “There are ‘more fish in the sea’ as we say. You move on and don’t get hung up on the people who say no, even if *most* people might say no.”

The analogy made sense in Tel Aviv. In Jerusalem I tried to rephrase this as an analogy to “cold calls” in business, but the response remained uncomfortable, and as sick-to-the-stomach as an adolescent boy at his first school dance. Those who turned out to these workshops sat patiently through the analogy, and finally, one apparently “conservadox” woman voiced the worries that, I suspected, everyone was silently feeling. Her concerns were held until I took questions, but when she began to voice them, they rolled out one, right after the other. She said—I am paraphrasing from my notes here—

Here it is not that simple. If we put up posters, flyers, or hand out cards, or just go up and talk to people, what happens if it is the wrong person? What happens if it is not rejecting a sales pitch that we face, but a bomb, a knife or a gun? These are real concerns. I want to meet with good Muslims, but I do not know how to find them without also inviting terrorists.

All of this had to be worked through before we could actually get down to the business of the second seminar which was on the proposals for a New Constitution as a working prototype for a blueprint for peace and reconciliation between Jews and Muslims in the Holy Land. That was, after all, my intention in conducting the 2014 seminars in the region.

These fears were ultimately talked through and worked through, in what was a successful first seminar in both cities. In each case I tried my best to follow the Socratic method, asking questions to evoke and allow people to voice their concerns. I noticed that when I proposed

solutions—particularly in Jerusalem—each affirmative statement was met with doubt, resistance, or rejection. Noticing this, I changed to the Socratic approach, asking more than telling. In each case, this yielded better results. It seemed that both chapters wanted a forum to discuss their fears, have them accepted as valid, and, then, come up with their own solutions to how they could and would proceed with their activism in spite of them. The solutions were unique to each chapter's demographics, as well as the demographics and political climate of each city.

With very little prompting, the participants in Tel Aviv began pouring forth suggestions, and even outlining and organizing solutions, times, places and dates for grassroots outreach activism on their own. In Jerusalem, this was less the case. It reminded me more of a group therapy session, particularly for those coping with posttraumatic stress disorder or the like. Indeed, that seemed to be what we were engaged in. At the time, I felt somewhat in over my head in terms of experience during this session. As mentioned in earlier discussion in this study, this would change upon returning to the United States and facing threats to myself and my family for this work.

While these specific study circles constitute a minority of the overall chapter list, the Israeli study circles are at the heart of the Hashlamah Project's work. In addition to working with the Israeli chapters, it became relevant to widen the focus of this follow-up study to involve the founding Hashlamah Project Yellow Springs Chapter, drawing from what I have learned in the pilot project, involving members who are persevering in the face of such threats, in spite of the intimidation and what it could potentially cost them.

Accordingly, this investigation into sustainability under conditions of fear and threats is focused on the practical side of Hashlamah ideas, looking, through action research, at how they can be discussed and digested in the most volatile fronts, with respect to Jewish and Muslim

interaction—those situated on the Israeli left and those facing off with the furthest fringe of the American right. For purposes of this dissertation the focus is on three chapters and their study circles, two in the very different parts of Israel I engaged in 2014, as well as the founding chapter in the United States.

The context for the research question is set in my own experiences confronting threats of terrorism while engaged in this work. Through the Hashlamah Project, I have asked how history, specifically religious history, can be used to fight back against “the forces of ignorance and oppression” (*quat al-jahl wa-l-zulum*), whether from far right Israeli nationalists, armed anti-Muslim protesters on the American Right, or the most narrow minded thinking elements of Islamicate fundamentalism.

Initially, I had intended upon using the viral news story and video of me debating a “Patriot” mosque protester in a confrontation that ended in a hug (Holley, 2015), as described at the beginning of this dissertation, as part of the method of how to discuss with research participants ways to deal with physical confrontation by extreme right, whether in Israel or the United States. The idea was to show the video as a catalyst for discussion, of what can be learned from this approach. Would things always end up peacefully like this or was this merely anecdotal coincidence? The example of my interaction at the Columbus mosque is somewhat trademark to the Hashlamah Project approach, I stressed paying particular attention to the elements raised above, in discussion related to the Constitution of Medina (see Yildirim, 2009). This area specifically has been highlighted by participants whom I presented it to, as core to the neutralizing argument in confrontations with the most violent and menacing elements which seek to keep us divided. But this is a secondary question to my research question about sustainability under threat in general, and would then only apply to members of the Hashlamah Project. As

well, there are some pitfalls to presenting myself at the center of the Hashlamah Project, which is neither the intention, nor the practical reality. Thus, the problem with this video making me seem like the “business card” of the foundation is that it can lead new participants into the trapping of seeing me as the hierarchical “head” of the group, which is in fact entirely decentralized. I have thus found it necessary to constantly reemphasize and reassert the anarchic nature of the group whereby “seniority” is based only on self-directed work for the group and not handed down a leadership pyramid. Should one—including myself—discontinue putting in work for the group’s collective aims, that notion of seniority would by definition, wane, or disappear altogether. As such, I withdrew this video and any approach that could have led to focus on me or my personal activism.

My involvement in the community central to the research shows both the pro and the con of participatory action research. The positive is in its yielding vast amounts of insight and data that an outside observer would simply not be privy to, and, therefore, would have to go to greater, perhaps impossible lengths to observe. The negative is that closeness to the subject studied can potentially color or even cloud one’s analysis.

In general, the abiding principles, which qualify participatory action research, should be the accuracy of information about the practices studied, the need served by the research to a given audience, and the realistic and diplomatic feasibility of the action research. Finally, the ever-present concern for the ethical and legal propriety of the research must watch over the first three principles. All of these concepts and considerations have been key to my work with the study circle chapters in this dissertation.

Methods

The origins of participatory action research, which inspires the work at hand, can be traced to the work of Kurt Lewin (1946). Lewin is reputed to have argued that trying to change a system is the best way of understanding it. He was a German psychologist and a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany. His positionality informed and embodied the philosophy “that people would be more motivated about their work if they were involved in the decision-making about how the workplace was run” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 41).

Lewin (1946) introduced the phrase “action research” meaning studying social systems while simultaneously attempting to change the system. His action research paid particular attention to issues such as segregation, discrimination, and assimilation. He was concerned with assisting people in resolving issues and bringing about change while studying the impact of those changes in question (Stringer & Genat, 2004). Lewin’s ideas continue to influence researchers and action research methods, which include observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating, and modifying (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Each iterative cycle can then turn into another cycle. Paulo Freire, another influential participatory action research theorist, believed that critical reflection was crucial for personal and social change (Freire, 1968/2000; Maguire, 1987).

The qualitative research methodology of participatory action research integrates the methods and techniques of observing, documenting, analyzing, and interpreting characteristics, patterns, attributes, and meanings of psycho-social phenomena under study (Gillis & Jackson, 2002). Qualitative methodology, unlike quantitative, seeks to describe and understand, rather than to predict and control (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995).

Researchers who employ participatory action research methods frequently face criticisms that from a quantitative perspective, this approach is a “soft” method of research (L. Young,

2006). Researchers employing a participatory action research methodology may thus face challenges from other researchers who are not familiar with today's widespread acceptance of qualitative and mixed methods research since participatory action research "focuses on voice and everyday experiences" (L. Young, 2006, p. 501) rather than quantitative data.

Koch and Kralik (2006) argued that participatory action research is democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualitative inquiry that remains distinct from other qualitative methodologies. Maguire (1987) suggested that participatory action research includes "a method of social investigation of problems, involving the participation of oppressed and ordinary people in a problem posing and solving" (p. 29). Lincoln argued further that qualitative methods in general are naturalistic, and that participatory modes "disclose the lived experiences of individuals . . . there [is] no single, objective reality [but rather] multiple realities based on subjective experience and circumstance" (as cited in Wuest, 1995, p. 29).

Marshall and Rossman (2006) described participatory action research as decentralized traditional research and an alternative approach to traditional social or scientific research, as it moves social inquiry from a linear cause and effect perspective, to a participatory framework considering the contexts and positions of stakeholders. Streubert and Carpenter (1995) recommended that at least three selected methods be used to transcend the limitations of each individual methodology, so as to triangulate data generation and be more effective at problem-solving.

Some of these methods as employed in this participatory study included participant observation, field notes, interviews, personal logs. Discussion here is of the three most commonly cited methods in the literature: focus groups, participant observation, and interviews.

There was originally an intention to utilize focus groups for this study, but this was thwarted by my unexpected inability to travel for the interviews. Focus groups are nevertheless an effective tool and are a part of normal Hashlamah practice and previous research methods utilized with chapters outside of the context of this dissertation and were certainly utilized in the 2014 pilot study. Focus groups are a “form of group interview that capitalizes on communication between the research participants in order to generate data” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299). This method would have worked well in this research because it fit organically with the way the Hashlamah Project proceeds. Small discussion groups are the heart of the Hashlamah Project while focus groups typically consist of seven to 12 individuals, all sharing certain characteristics relevant to the focus of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The small number of individuals in a focus group, generally speaking, facilitates an environment where communication amongst all participants is easier than in large groups. From the standpoint of the researcher, this increases the potential for useful data to be generated during sessions. Far from being removed or detached, however, in participatory action research, the researcher creates or facilitates a supportive environment where discussion and differing points of view are encouraged or even teased out through innovative approaches to facilitation and dialogue (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

In participatory action research, all who are collaboratively involved in the research process are active participants throughout the entire research process; the facilitator typically provides structure only in a loose, decentralized sense, in order to guide or maintain the natural focus group or study circle (Greenwood & Levin, 1998).

Participant observation provides the researcher with privileged access to research in social situations that capture the context in which individuals function (Gillis, Jackson, &

Mulhall (2003). The researcher is immersed in the setting with the participants and thereby actually becomes a participant (Spradley, 1980). In this approach, the researcher attains first-hand knowledge of social behavior as it unfolds over time in the social situation (Gillis & Jackson, 2002), obtaining a broader view of what is occurring, what is communicated and what is implicit in the situation. I am already familiar with the “culture” of Hashlamah Project Study Circles, which means that I had to be careful not to take for granted that I know but remain open to really seeing and hearing what happens in observing while participating.

Interviews are a key method used in participatory action research, which “enable participants to describe their situation” (Stringer, 1999, p. 68). Interviewing is highly appropriate for collecting data related to complex human experiences (Kaufman, 1992; Kvale, 1996). Reinharz (1992) explained: “Interviewing offers researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words, rather than the words of the researcher” (p. 19). Both the researcher and the participant share and learn throughout the interviewing process in a reciprocal manner. Interview questions must “be carefully formulated to ensure that participants are given maximum opportunity to present events and phenomena in their own terms and to follow agendas of their own choosing” (Stringer, 1999, p. 70).

Utilizing these methods within the over-arching framework of participatory action research, the purpose has been to respect the sensitivity of the topic area, to emphasize the community as a unity of identity, while building on strengths within the community. I approached this research in a way that facilitated collaborative partnerships throughout the study. The participative action approach was initiated to serve mutual benefit, not for me alone as a researcher, but for the Hashlamah Project, Israeli and Palestinian society, and even broader Jewish and Muslim interaction globally. After all, the hope was for this research to further

develop the Hashlamah Project and its future approaches by developing trust and relationship-building, as well as disseminating the findings to stakeholders. In particular, the focus is on the sustainability of the organization and this type of activism when it also triggers potentially violent response. An ethical consideration is that as the founder of the Hashlamah Project, I needed someone else to recruit participants who are also Hashlamah members because they might feel less free to refuse participation when I am the one asking. As such, facilitators of each chapter have fulfilled this role.

Emphasis on Face-to-Face Interactions

The reason for the Hashlamah Project's insistence on interactions, discussions, and debates taking place off of social media, website discussion forums, and the like is the impossibility of understanding nonverbal cues when the exchange takes place in text format only. Intentions are misunderstood on both sides and tempers quickly flare when the topics are volatile in nature. Zetlin (2017) explained,

You've seen it happen dozens if not hundreds of times. "You post an opinion, or a complaint, or a link to an article on Facebook. Somebody adds a comment, disagreeing (or agreeing) with whatever you posted. Someone else posts another comment disagreeing with the first commenter, or with you, or both. Then others jump in to add their own viewpoints. Tempers flare. Harsh words are used. (para. 1)

While this might be a wonderful way of meeting and networking with like-minded individuals, it does not generally bridge divides but, in fact, often serves to deepen them. What often started out as a well-intended exchange of ideas and debate of perspectives can soon degenerate into "you and several of your friends [being] engaged in a virtual shouting match, aiming insults in all directions, sometimes at people you've never even met" (Zetlin, 2017, para. 1). Nutt (2017) added, "When it comes to controversial ideas, a person's voice is more persuasive than the written word" (para. 1). Schroeder, Kardas, and Epley (2017) conducted several experiments exposing volunteers to ideas they agreed or disagreed with. In one experiment,

approximately 300 people watched, listened to, or read arguments about polarizing topics such as war, abortion or comparing country and rap music, which, the authors found to be genres people tend to have strong feelings about. Schroeder et al. asked the volunteers to judge the person who was in the argument with them. Those exposed to someone whom they disagreed with by and large defaulted to dehumanize the communicator. The respondents saw them as “having a diminished capacity to either think or feel” (p. 1745). Conversely, in cases where the respondent listened to the argument, regardless of whether face-to-face, or on a video or audio file, they were significantly “less dismissive than those who read a transcript of the opposing opinion” (p. 1745). The general response in this study is quite familiar to anyone who has ever discussed politics on social media or Internet forums, a broad belief that people who don’t agree with you are either too stupid or too uncaring to know better. Many who have engaged in social media disagreements know this all too well, but nevertheless persist in fighting against the science behind interpersonal communications. Schroeder et al. concluded that “we respond very differently to what people write than to what they say—even if those things are exactly the same” (p. 4).

That result was also no surprise to at least one of the researchers, who was inspired to try the experiment after a similar experience of his own. Schroeder told the *Washington Post*,

One of us read a speech excerpt that was printed in a newspaper from a politician with whom he strongly disagreed. The next week, he heard the exact same speech clip playing on a radio station. He was shocked by how different his reaction was toward the politician when he read the excerpt compared to when he heard it. (Schroeder as cited in Nutt, 2017, para. 6)

Thus, written comments that seemed outrageous to this researcher, when spoken out loud seemed reasonable.

This research and commentary suggested that often people are using the wrong medium for discussion, debate, and reconciliation:

The best way for people who disagree with each other to work out their differences and arrive at a better understanding or compromise is by talking to each other, as people used to do at town hall meetings and over the dinner table. (Zetlin, 2017, para. 6)

Face-to-face, even remotely via Skype or teleconference, it is much easier to have a civil exchange of ideas. Nonverbal cues are picked up on and the etiquette of waiting for one idea to be expressed before countering it can be observed. I extended this to the interview process herein as well, drawing from the Hashlamah Project's face-to-face approach; I had to bite my tongue often during the interviews. In the interviews I found it difficult at times to include things I found disappointing. Nevertheless, it is relevant because these are real experiences. They were included as findings of the data and are necessary in order to see what we are to do with the reality presented in the interview responses and answer how that helps us better think about the sustainability of the organization.

I dealt with this tension by determining to fact-check some of the things said, but reserving that for Chapter V, as commentary and conclusions, rather than corruption of the data collection. The first rule in interpretive analysis is respect for the experience and the time respondents provide. That can become difficult in the heat of the interviews, transcriptions and writing. Instead, I resolved to not think critically of what has been said, with regards to my relaying of the data. To be sure, some of the responses do not mirror my own ideas, and in some cases I believe there are serious critiques of some perspectives, that must be challenged with outside data and documentation.

Ethics and Positionality

Beyond all of the take-away ideas and realizations from my research, I am reminded by the results of the data collection, that the Hashlamah Project Foundation has a very difficult task that is not merely a matter of confronting problems or providing solutions. It is not even just a matter of providing methods for overcoming resistance or “immunity to change” (Kegan &

Lahey, 2009). The implications of what the Hashlamah Project is doing are far reaching, extending into individual lives and families, at times putting participants in situations which could alienate them, or even estrange them, from segments of society, or their own families.

Moving forward, the path is not quite as straight and clear as it had seemed when I began the pilot study. There is now the additional consideration of addressing the aforementioned *fatwah*, described in Chapter I, against all of the Hashlamah Project stakeholders. I have communicated this, and the related concerns and considerations to be taken, to every facilitator who I am in regular contact with, and informed them that our ethics dictate that they in turn inform their chapter participants of this reality and allow them to decide how or if they wish to continue participating in the Hashlamah Study Circles.

But what should we do from there? Upon meeting a new potential participant, do we interrupt greetings to inform them of the situation, the threats? Do we simply post a notice of this on our website and leave it to people to find? Announcing this publicly is logical, and ethically understood, but at what point in the timeline of meeting new or prospective allies are we violating our moral duties if we do not warn of these concerns to each new person as they walk into the room? Is this more a disease that we must disclose or is it a matter of course and rite of passage, given the grandeur of the endeavors we are undertaking?

The questions have been ironically answered by the largely Evangelical Christian “patriot” movement, which quickly forced me out of my few months’ hiatus from activism as described in Chapter I. Even though the seminars on activism in the face of fear and threats of violence were secondary to the mission of my trip, that topic and focus is now at the forefront of my doctoral work.

I did not feel, as these events arose, that I could stand down while anti-Muslim demonstrations of armed bigots gathered like storm clouds outside of U.S. mosques. As a self-described “Judeo-Sufi,” I feel as much connected to the Islamic community as I do to the Jewish people. Yet my position affords me the privilege and possibility of deciding when, how and whether to engage in resistance. My position allows me to choose when and where (and if) I wage fights for justice. For those of us who are not within targeted communities, the danger that comes to us is largely because we choose to place ourselves in activism and social justice work. Others are not so lucky as to have choice. Many do not decide to become revolutionaries; the struggle comes to them. Either they resist or they die or face continued oppression. They have no choice for an easy life. The very fact that I do have the choice and that so many others do not, keeps me constantly aware that things are seriously wrong in the world, and that it is my responsibility to do the right thing. The fact that I can decide when or if to engage in the struggle highlights just how necessary—even morally obligatory—it is that I do. This conclusion would emerge as a theme within many of the interviews with Jewish participants, as I will take up in Chapter IV.

Conflict of interests. There was a legitimate issue of a conflict of interest in my research, in that I knew the facilitators in all cases in this study, and also knew the participants of individual Study Circles in many instances. Some of the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem participants were people I had met during the aforementioned 2014 pilot study. While knowing someone you are interviewing is not inherently a conflict of interest, it could be assumed by people before reading the study at hand, that those interviewed were in some sort of subordinate position to me within the group, and thus expected to parrot what their expectations of my ideas were. This potential for conflict of interest, however, was mitigated by the fact that the Hashlamah Project is

decentralized by design, and each chapter is entirely autonomous. No one garners any favor or rank in the group by having a relationship with me, nor could they. As well, from the start, as mentioned before, I have intentionally deemphasized myself so that no issues of people relying on top down leadership could form in the collective.

Because of this, and because facilitators disseminated recruitment letters to anonymous participants whose identities I did not know, there was no way for me to be aware of who accepted or rejected the opportunity to participate in this study. Some could simply have been absent from sessions when this was presented, as attendance in each study circle fluctuates, even depending on what time of the year it is. As such, only those genuinely interested and eager to participate were passed on to me for interviewing; but there would be no way for me to know if word of the study had even reached a would-be participant as some simply might not have been made aware.

As an active participant in the Hashlamah Project, I found that it is hard to not interject, even offend, and to refrain from attempting to “correct” what I sometimes heard as very problematic statements during the interviews. In following the approach and instructions of Cockburn (1998), my attempt at being a worthy observer in this phase of the research, and data collection, was about putting myself in brackets, so to speak, and just being there as a careful, respectful listener with a degree of humility.

The term “assess” etymologically means “to sit beside,” not to stand over or judge. I tried to do just that as I assessed the responses of Hashlamah participants, reporting the findings and observing thematical analysis of the data in partnership, cooperation and co-participation. This was an essential and integral component to this study and is core to the chapter that follows, as it explored the “on the ground” application of the Hashlamah Project, and the approaches it takes.

Risks and consent. As in all of the research with the Hashlamah Project, there is the potential risk of participants being identified and “outed” for participation, in certain areas of the world. This is less a problem in most Western communities, but some of our chapters have serious concerns about this—often extending to their personal safety.

The informed consent process took place by making sure the individual participant was given adequate information concerning the study, as well as provided adequate opportunity for the subject to consider all options, responding to questions, ensuring that they have comprehended this information, obtaining their voluntary agreement to participate and, by continuing to provide information as they or situation requires. I requested and was granted a waiver of signed informed consent in my institutional review board (IRB) application. The research was of minimal risk however, because of its focus on collection of sensitive but anonymous data; I did not want any written documentation that links the participant’s identity to the research study. I reviewed the consent document (Appendix B) with them, made certain a copy was left with them, and got the consent form to them in person and via email.

Interviews used in this project were guided by research questions outlined at the beginning of this chapter. As there was a concern about revealing identities or participants’ identifying biographical details, these details were simply never collected—except when biographical data were revealed in responses to questions themselves, as they were never critical to the data that was being acquired. There was no filming or audio recording of interviews, and the process of de-identifying was preemptive, by requesting no specific information about the individual participants on the consent forms.

Though the intention was for these interviews to be conducted in person, participants ended up being interviewed via Skype or other forms of video conferencing. But there was no

video recording nor any form of audio recording. Responses to questions were transcribed, but names were not attached, only the participant's gender, nationality, their local chapter, and which ethno-religious community they came from.

Anonymity was centrally important to those who participated, and a prerequisite for participation. In many cases, family background, occupation and where one grew up—which village, city or school—can matter a lot when talking about real or perceived fears. Still, the paradox is that these were the very sorts of details that many initially told chapter leaders they did not want included for the very reason that they could easily identify them in sometimes small communities. For instance, if I gave an anonymous interview but said I was from the Village of Yellow Springs, everyone in town would know exactly who was giving the interview. Many Palestinian and Israeli towns and villages and even cities are the same way, and for that reason, the questions were designed with such details deliberately and preemptively omitted.

In ethics applications, one identifies benefits that justify impacts or risks for participants. The benefits this study potentially was to yield were many, but the most focused, direct and obvious benefit was gauging the interest and response to a proven solution to Jewish and Muslim intra-regional conflict. Conversely, the risks proved generally small, and considering the degree of anonymity afforded in these interviews, they were also easy to mitigate.

Logistics of the Research

After helping guide the Study Circles from time to time, I consistently withdraw while participants more or less lead themselves in a democratic manner. This approach blends naturally with participatory action research as the methodology for my study of these Study Circles and issues we face in and through them. There is simply no other way besides participatory action research that fits as a methodology for this sort of study, as there was simply no way that I could

research in the contexts of the Hashlamah Project, without unnaturally divorcing myself from the group, which I had been so deeply involved in, on several levels.

My approach to participant observation came from interviewing and observing Hashlamah Project members located in the State of Israel and in the United States. I contacted and recruited participants by pitching the idea to various Study Circle facilitators who then discussed this with individual members, within the context of a regular meeting, asking who would be interested in participating. With those Chapters which decided to participate, I collaborated in the design of interview questions. Participant facilitators were involved in this design and, as well, were subsequently involved in data analysis as well through conference call collaboration after interviews were conducted, to ensure proper representation of interview contents. In several cases, the initial answers given during interviews were expanded on via follow-up sessions. This was at the request of participants who were told to think about their initial answers and feel free to contact me to expand or amend what they said (or to withdraw from the study if they no longer felt comfortable). The purpose was to reconnect with those interviewed and verify that their words had been accurately represented and that they were satisfied with that representation. This data was made available to the study circles in digital format—with anonymity maintained—with post-session dialogue being carried out remotely, to involve the facilitators directly in data analysis. This was to fully inform me about that process and provide immediate benefit for the Chapters involved in this research, as well as to make certain that the wishes of all participants had been respected, before the findings were published within the work at hand.

Observations were conducted and data gathered by remotely interviewing, in lieu of traveling to the Chapters involved in this study, to directly talk with participants. Ideally, I would

have loved for all Chapters to participate, but the amount of data that would have been generated would have been prohibitive for purposes of the dissertation. As well, what if only two Chapter members want to participate on one case and several wish to in another case? My criteria for selection of individual participants was only that they be actively involved in the Hashlamah Project and believe that they have experiences that are relevant to my overarching dissertation question—beyond that, the only requirement is their willingness to participate.

Interviewing Process

The interview process naturally began with recruitment of willing and relevant participants. Naturally, not all members of each of the three relevant Hashlamah Study Circles wanted to participate, and that is something we accept as a given from the outset—as in many cases there is a large percentage of participants that varies from session to session, while a core remain. Of those Chapter cores, we have already determined a willingness to participate. I contacted and recruited participants through pitching the idea to various Study Circle facilitators and having them approach individual members, within the context of a meeting, to ask who would be interested in participating. The consent forms (see Appendix B) and recruiting letter (see Appendix A) were read aloud to each participant, individually, followed by obtaining oral consent.

My plan for the sessions was to have mixed approaches, first fully formulating the interview questions with study-circle leaders and facilitators, then having discussions or interviews with particularly relevant participants about their relevant experiences. Throughout interviewing, I tried my best to follow the Socratic method of ask questions and allow people to voice their concerns, *asking* more than *telling*.

As a facilitator myself, I suggested resources for the groups including suggested readings which have been reviewed in Chapter II, useful discussions and intergroup sharing where common experiences can be observed and matched or paired by myself as an “outside” observer, along with discussion with facilitators. This was, by nature and necessity, not the same resources for each group.

The sessions included questions which asked what risks are being taken by the individual and what the costs to them are? As well, it asked what fears of backlash and terrorism do they have and how does the individual confront those fears and engage in peace activism in spite of those fears? I then asked how they differentiate between fears and credible threats to their safety and life? More to the point of the overarching dissertation question, I asked how sustainable they think their activism is while under such threats and what steps they take to insulate from such threats?

Further, I asked how members can support each other as a group, understanding and navigating fears or threats together and what kind of other support would be helpful? I looked then to questions of how they believe that support can be realized and in what ways these solutions can give peace of mind that facilitates continued activism in the face of credible threats? Finally, I asked how risk-taking and perseverance in the face of threats made them feel vulnerable, and empathize with those in oppressed contexts who face their own sets of threats, violations of dignity and such? In other words, how has their experience of facing threats and persevering helped the individual activist to honor the dignity of others. The questions that I asked were as follows:

1. What are the risks you are taking and what are the costs?
2. What fears of backlash and terrorism do you have?

3. How do you confront those fears and engage in peace activism in spite of those fears?
4. How do you differentiate between fears and credible threats to your safety and life?
5. How sustainable do you think your activism is while under such threats?
6. What steps do you take to insulate yourself from such threats?
7. How can members support each other as a group understanding and navigating fears or threats together?
8. What kind of other support would be helpful?
9. How can that support be realized?
10. In what ways do these solutions give you peace of mind that facilitates your continued activism in the face of credible threats?
11. How has your own risk-taking and perseverance in the face of threats made you feel vulnerable, and empathize with those in oppressed contexts who face their own sets of threats, violations of dignity and such?
12. Finally, has your experience of facing threats and persevering helped you to honor the dignity of others?

In order to triangulate the data, I employed analyses of multiple people to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from a single observer. These were members of the same Antioch doctoral program, from a cohort the year before me—both people who have lived in Israel and who are very familiar with the politics and activism surrounding issues in the region. I additionally used data collected from these interviews to change course as necessary by collaborating with facilitators of participant groups midway through the study, in order to evaluate whether the objectives were being met. I evaluated the project overall through such collaborative consultation, to see if there was consensus on to this effect.

Specifically, my goals and aspirations were to help the members of the chapters, including myself, confront fears of backlash and terrorism, and to help potential participants confront those fears and engage in activism notwithstanding. The proposed timeline for this was estimated as one month. But as participants have their own schedules, I remained flexible with this time frame.

I reported my findings by review of cross-case analysis of chapter cases. Cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006) can mobilize knowledge from individual case studies, through accumulating case knowledge, comparing and contrasting cases, and in so doing, producing new knowledge that is especially relevant here given the different countries involved.

I worked with three chapters, one in the United States and two in very different demographic areas of Israel-Palestine which were the focus of the 2014 pilot study. The framework built upon existing Hashlamah Project Study Circles, but participants from other organizations than the Hashlamah Project were invited to collaborate and share their experiences, observations and feelings. Those who participated, however, all had some level of involvement in the Hashlamah Project. In this way, the research utilizes the existing Hashlamah Project framework and expanded and build upon that. Of all those who participated, we did not have anyone who asked to be withdrawn from the study after the fact, seemingly indicating the informed consent process had done its job of preemptively excluding those who might otherwise have later decided to be excluded.

Goals of the Interviews and Analysis of the Data

The goals of the interview questions were primarily to determine how members can support each other as a group understanding and navigating fears or threats together; and to realize what kind of other support would be helpful moving forward so that burn out or drop out

does not need to occur. The thematic questions were about the kinds of fears activists face, in their own words and experiences. Ultimately, our collective goal is to discern in what ways can these solutions bring peace of mind that facilitates continued activism in the face of credible threats. In the aftermath of these interviews, participants have been involved in continued discussion with group facilitators who, in turn, have continued working directly with me, and we have utilized the data from this study to edify Hashlamah Project Study Circles involved, as it is similarly my intent that other individual activists and organizations will find this research useful and illuminating to their work.

The data from the interviews implied what is common across chapters, as well as what unique factors in certain regions may or may not arise. I looked at the kinds of arguments to talk about these fears, the kinds of ways to process fear, acknowledge it as a natural reaction evolved to keep us safe, but also to keep it in check and not be paralyzed by it. I evaluated the project overall by the conclusions we collectively and collaboratively reached in terms of identifying the problems and working together to come up with functional solutions. In looking at the ways forward, this study examined conditions to be able to sustain in the face of serious threats.

Unforeseen Obstacles in Conducting the Interviews

The interviews that are presented in Chapter IV, were initially scheduled to be held July 26–30, 2017, with Hashlamah Project members who reside in the State of Israel. Interviews were held in the United States between the *Shabbat/Sabt* meeting on the July 7, 2017 through several sessions over the next week, concluding on the next Shabbat (July 14).

Observations were conducted and data gathered by way of my communicating with the chapters involved in this study in July 2017, and directly talking with participants. The participation of interviewees electronically was contingent upon the guarantee that no recording

devices were used in those interviews. As noted, the intention was originally to carry these interviews out in person, but an abrupt change in Israeli law proved an insurmountable obstacle for in-person interviews, until appeal could be later made to the Israeli Department of the Interior.

The unforeseen obstacles in conducting these interviews essentially began by me booking tickets to Tel Aviv. I had arranged with the chapters in Israel to expand on the sort of seminars I had previously conducted there and in the course of doing so, interview participants who had agreed to be a part of this study. These intentions were abruptly blocked when I was turned away at check-in and told that I was on a no-fly list specific to the State of Israel. I have traveled to Israel and Palestine numerous times in the past with no problems whatsoever. But this time, a new law had just been passed only the week before my trip that allowed Israeli officials to block anyone they accuse of supporting Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS).

As it turns out, I do personally support BDS as a movement, but I have never made a public case for it with the Hashlamah Project per se. So, it seemed odd that I was placed on this list. This turn in the research process was totally unexpected.

I had arrived at the Cincinnati airport for my initial, intended departure, just across the Ohio River, in Kentucky. My flight originating from Cincinnati to Tel Aviv via El Al airlines, with an intended July 25 departure, and a returning flight just a few days later on July 29, was blocked at the check-in counter. The police were called but kept their distance. A group of half a dozen officers were within 20 feet or so of me, but never engaged me directly, though it was clearly discernable from overhearing their conversations with each other and on their radios, that they were there for me.

After some inquiry by the woman who had tried to check me in, I was informed that I was being blocked for entry into Israel and would not be allowed to board the flight. While still

in line, I contacted fellow activists via my smart phone, and was informed that there was a new law in place that banned people accused of supporting BDS. Just days before, three other Jewish activists had been blocked from boarding a flight to Israel as well. Like me, they were not told directly at the check-in counter that it was because of BDS, but this was widely understood to be the reason. Eventually, this would be publicly admitted by the Israeli government.

After spending some time discussing these matters electronically, while still at the airport—on the phone, text, email, and social media with facilitators—it was suggested that I would then conduct the interviews via Skype. The Yellow Springs interviews had already been in person in the United States. I explained to my advisor that I felt this route was better than another option, which could have been limiting the project to the U.S. only. Switching to all U.S. chapters was not a good idea for a couple of reasons: first, because Israel-Palestine is the focal point of the conflict and people there have much on the ground, day-to-day experience with a different level of risks than we have here, and secondly, because switching interviews to all United States ones might raise the question to anyone who reads the dissertation, “why didn’t he study chapters over in Israel/Palestine?” Even if accompanied by an explanation, it would have limited the project findings, and probably would have reduced applicability to other organizations with similar focuses.

Nearly six months after this incident, I was informed of the specific reason for my denial of entry. Even though the Hashlamah Project Foundation has encouraged dialogue and cooperation between pro-Palestinian Israelis and Palestinians, and even though the organization has no official stance on BDS—in part because many of our members have lived, worked, and spent their money in Israel since birth—the ban extended to me individually because of my

involvement in several of the organizations singled out by the Israeli government for a travel ban.

Israel's Strategic Affairs Ministry had for months refused to divulge which organizations are on the list, and I was left with no explanation, nor response to my appeal for some time. By January 2018, we discovered the reason for the secrecy. Several groups that would seem above reproach were banned from entry. The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization honored with the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize for assisting and rescuing victims of the Nazis, was and remains among the list of groups whose activists Israel has announced it has barred from entering the alleged "Jewish State."

A number of European organizations I knew relatively little or nothing about were also listed, including the France-Palestine Solidarity Association, BDS France, BDS Italy and the European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine and Friends of Al-Aqsa. The United States-based organizations proved more illuminating, as to why I was on the ban list. American Friends Service Committee, American Muslims for Palestine, Code Pink, Jewish Voice for Peace, National Students for Justice in Palestine, and the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights were all banned. I have directly participated in several of those organizations. In addition, some United States-based Hashlamah Project Chapters have notable members from these groups. I did not think my involvement was that high profile that the Israeli government should have any knowledge of this. Nevertheless, I found myself blocked from even boarding my flight, apparently due to these associations.

This indicated to me, as well, that the ban was much more extensive than Israel was or is admitting publicly. That is because the ban on BDS activists is said to apply to activists in those organizations as well as to independent activists who meet any of the following criteria:

1. They hold senior-level positions in the targeted organizations.
2. They are key activists in the boycott movement, whether or not they operate independently or through the targeted organizations.
3. They are establishment figures (such as mayors) who openly support a boycott.
4. They operate on behalf of targeted organizations.

I have never held any senior-level position in any of those organizations, while I have co-led region chapters of some, a number of years ago. I have never traveled to Israel on behalf of any of these organizations. It seems that I was being targeted as an individual, not just a member of these organizations, as the ban reserves the right to ban individuals operating independently. But I have never been that avowed as a proponent of BDS. I support it, but I have not rallied for it and I think there is a lot of work I need to continue doing in Israel, with Israeli activists and organizations, and I do not feel that I could ethically claim to be engaged fully in the BDS mission statement, while participating in Israeli society, and travel so much. Ultimately, I found myself with more questions than answers, but I had to proceed nonetheless with my research.

Conducting the Interviews

Chapter IV describes the process by which data was generated, as well as presenting the findings of this study. A few significant thematic categories worthy of note emerged in the analysis of the data. These high frequency descriptors surfaced across all the interviews and mapped to multiple thematic categories which are coded from the outset of each interview. The high frequency descriptors underscore key discourse used by participants and displays language accentuating the relevance of the thematic categories to the study. Chapter IV further discusses the patterns, relationships and themes—supported by the data—presented in the findings of my research. It also discusses and groups the patterns, relationships and themes as supported by the

data. As the nature of participatory action research is facilitative of qualitative inquiry (while quantitative examples exist), the description of the data and the conclusions will indicate how content analysis, for example, or other forms of textual analysis were conducted.

Content analysis makes replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material. By systematically evaluating source material, in this case oral communication, qualitative data can be converted into quantitative data. In doing so, we will ask how are the data defined, and from what population is the data drawn? Though this represents a relatively short portion of this study, it will provide a useful concluding summary of what demographics feel threatened and in what ways. A discussion of the implications of this branches off into Chapter V, concluding this study.

The method of content analysis enables the researcher to include large amounts of textual information and systematically identify its properties, such as the frequencies of most used keywords by locating the more important structures of its communication content. This will feature more centrally in Chapter V. Such amounts of textual information must be categorized to provide a meaningful reading of content under scrutiny. For example, D. B. Robertson (1976) created a coding frame for a comparison of modes of party competition between British and American parties. Discussion of these keywords, frequencies and implications for this research will center more on Chapter V.

Ultimately, the collective goal for the group and relevant activists who find this data and discussion useful, was to discern in what ways can these solutions bring peace of mind that facilitates continued activism in the face of credible threats?

This chapter proved to be perhaps the most difficult in terms of the actual methodological immersion of participatory action research, and how I was to step outside of my role in reporting

on the findings of the interviews, even while remaining within that role as founder of the Hashlamah Project. Throughout my doctoral work, I have focused on social justice and reconciliatory peace work between Israelis and Palestinians specifically, and Jews and Muslims broadly. During the course of my activism and nonprofit work with the Hashlamah Project Foundation, I encountered an array of terroristic threats, which raised the question of how activists can persevere with such work in the face of this sort of menacing. In the study that follows in Chapter IV, I set out to research the spectrum from fear borne of generalizations, prejudices and low threat familial and social ostracism (nonetheless a real risk), to full-blown threats against one's personal safety, family or individual lives and how we can continue on, persevering as activists as we face these risks. The best way to answer this question of perseverance was by collaborating with those experiencing these risks and threats, drawing on the research relevant to these threats and how to face them—particularly those common across contexts—and ascertaining what has been effective and what will be most effective going forward.

Chapter IV: Findings of the Study

In analyzing the data, the thematic questions allowed me to look at the kinds of fears activists face, in their own words and experiences. I surmised what trends are common across Hashlamah chapters, as well as what unique factors in certain regions may or may not arise. I looked at the kinds of arguments to talk about these fears, the kinds of ways to process fear, acknowledge it as a natural reaction evolved to keep us safe, but also keep it in check and not be paralyzed by it. I briefly give an overview of each participant, drawing from the entire interview from one of each chapter study circle, that I surmised best emphasized an array of relevant data with respect to the overarching thesis question. In the end, I evaluate the project overall by the conclusions we collectively and collaboratively reach in terms of identifying the problems and working together to come up with functional solutions. The participants interviewed are summarized and coded in Table 4.1, which includes the abbreviation for each demographic coding.

Table 4.1

Brief Description of Participants Including Abbreviations Used for Each

LOCATION/INTERVIEW NO.	GENDER	RELIGION/ ETHNICITY	CITIZENSHIP	ABBREVIATION
Tel Aviv Interview #1:	Male	Jewish	Israel	TA1.MJI
Tel Aviv Interview #2	Male	Jewish	Israeli	TA2.MJI
Tel Aviv Interview #3	Female	Jewish	Israeli	TA3.FJI
Tel Aviv Interview #4:	Male	Druze	Israeli	TA4.MDI
Tel Aviv Interview #5	Female	Jewish	Israeli	TA5.FJI
Jerusalem Interview #1:	Female	Muslim	Israeli	J1.FMI
Jerusalem Interview #2	Male	Muslim	non-Israeli Palestinian commuter	J2.MMP
Jerusalem Interview #3:	Male	Jewish	Israeli citizen	J3.MJI
Jerusalem Interview #4	Male	Mizrachi	Israeli citizen	J4.MJI
Jerusalem Interview #5	Female	Jewish	Israeli citizen	J5.FJI
Jerusalem Interview #6:	Female	Jewish	Israeli citizen	J6.FJI
Jerusalem Interview #7:	Female	Jewish	Gush Etzion Settler	J7.FJS
Jerusalem Interview #8	Male	Jewish Ethiopian	Israeli Citizen	J8.MJI
Yellow Springs Interview #1	Male	Jewish		YS1.MJ
Yellow Springs Interview #2	Male	Jewish		YS2.MJ
Yellow Springs Interview #3	Male	Muslim		YS3.MM
Yellow Springs Interview #4	Male	Jewish		YS4.MJ
Yellow Springs Interview #5	Male	Jewish African American		YS5.MJ

Note. MJI or FJI stands for male or female Jew, Israeli; MDI for Male Druze Israeli, etc.

The Hashlamah Chapters, in Brief

Before moving to presenting and analysis of the interviews it would be helpful to give the reader background on each respective Hashlamah chapter to fully situate the data from the interviews.

Tel Aviv Chapter. What awaited me with interviews of the Israeli Chapters was not at all unexpected, as many of the findings tied in directly with the seminars I had conducted in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in the earlier pilot study. Having worked on some of the issues those two Chapters had demonstrated during that study, I had hoped for some marked improvement in diversity, as a result.

With Tel Aviv Chapters, as with Jerusalem, I found a microcosm of the demographics of Israeli society, with predominantly Jewish study circles. I was informed by facilitators that there had been more efforts made in the past few years to include Muslims and to network with Palestinians in general for the Hashlamah Project. The groups in Israel were small, less than two dozen people in each at any given time, as they are in nearly every city where Hashlamah Project Study Circles have formed. The Tel Aviv Chapter had the typical mix of Ashkenazim with *S'fardic* heritage—which always seemed to lose out to the dominant Ashkenazi norms. As had been the case in my earlier visit in 2014, there were also Black African Jews involved. This study circle had evolved into one that met and discussed progressive, even revolutionary ideas, as well as the related history. It had actually begun engaging directly with their Muslim neighbors in Study Circle sessions. The sorts of engagement that the Hashlamah Project is all about, ideally, are experiences when participants step outside of comfort zones, cross socio-religious borders, collaborate, and, at times, even cross-pollinate ideas, experiences and practices.

Jerusalem Chapter. As noted previously, the Jerusalem Chapter was in a dire situation when I first visited them. The fear at that time was palpable, as it is now, but they have begun to step outside their comfort zones and engage with their neighbors. In assessing the composition of this chapter, it was obvious that the Study Circle participants were significantly more conservative in their religious views than their counterparts in Tel Aviv. Even though there is a large Muslim population situated within the city, there were significantly fewer Muslims in attendance than Jews. Still, this was a marked improvement in the balance from when I had visited them for the pilot study.

The demographics of the group have always been very different from the Tel Aviv Chapter. Unlike its more liberal counterpart, the Jerusalem Chapter was largely composed of fairly observant Jews, who made this apparent. While not being dressed like *chassidim* (a sect of Orthodox Jews that arose out of a pietistic movement originating in eastern Europe in the second half of the 18th century; see Elior, 2006)—many in the Chapter wear religious attire, *kippot* (yarmulkes) and in many cases there is a member here and there with *tzitziyot* (religious knotted fringes, tied to all four cornered garments in Jewish law) hanging from an undershirt *tallit gadol* (prayer shawl). Their participation was sociologically significant, as in most of Israeli society it is the less observant Jews on the political left who are the most engaged in pro-Palestinian activism. Religious groups are often characterized by right wing politics and prejudices. Still, there is a growing current in Israeli society of liberal and leftist Jews embracing more and more levels of religious observance, albeit in a more modern way than most the Orthodox would deem acceptable.

Still, that is not what was going on here. These were, as I would find out, people from religious, typically right-wing families and communities, who had come to the Hashlamah

Project from a more conservative religious and political angle than most in Tel Aviv or abroad. Along with the newer Muslim participants, most of the respondents from this study circle were from these religious backgrounds.

Yellow Springs Chapter. Chapter culture, and in that sense also, the interviews that I conducted, shifted significantly with the Yellow Springs, Ohio participants as they talked about their experiences. The composition of the Hashlamah Project Chapter in Yellow Springs is nearly equally Muslim and Jewish, with almost all participants being of moderate observance, when contrasted with either fundamentalist strains or nonpracticing members of each found in the respective Israeli Chapters religion. Most Jews in the Yellow Springs Chapter are Reform, Reconstruction or Conservative (*Masorti*), and most Muslims are Sunni Muslims.

Unlike Israeli Chapters, there is not nearly as much of a Jewish or Muslim influence on the United States, generally, nor in the Midwest specifically, in cultural norms. Evangelical theology and politics have influenced this current federal Administration as was the case several times in the past. But in the United States nationally, there is not the same degree of a singular ethno-religious, denominational, identity.

In the post-9/11 years, there has been a shift in how American identity exists in contrast to and defiance of the Muslim world. Historically, such a parallel scenario could be likened to pioneers and Native Americans in the emerging United States. American identity was certainly a defiance of indigenous sovereignty for many centuries.

The notion of a clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1996) quickly gained footing in the fearful years following the 9/11 attacks. Pundits positioned the relationship between the Christian West and the Muslim Middle East as irreconcilable and contradictory. The setting was presented

as a zero-sum game, where for the Muslim world to gain in any way, the West viewed itself as having to give up something (perhaps a colonial stake in the Middle East).

The trajectory of Islamophobia and related xenophobia in the United States continued on, directly lining up with the candidacy and presidency of Donald Trump. It has also been widely noted that Trump's candidacy and presidency have catalyzed the growth of anti-Semitism exponentially (e.g., Abramson, 2018; Cohen, 2018; Holmes, 2018; Shugerman, 2018). As such, the work of the Hashlamah Project has increased, in terms of welcoming Muslims together with Jews, showing immigrant communities that they are welcome here by the vast majority of us, and by organizing activist work around Trump Administration policies.

Regarding my positionality, as it relates to the participatory action research central to this study, it is methodologically and ideologically a complex relation between myself and the Hashlamah Project—particularly within the United States, and even more so in the Yellow Springs Study Circle. The relation is problematized in terms of disproportionate influence of myself as a more radical, idealistically anarchist activist and anti-fascist, on the Hashlamah Project direction and activities, compared to some other members. My position on political and revolutionary approaches has without question radicalized many members of groups I have created—whether the Hashlamah Project Foundation or the rebooted White Rose Society and “White Rose Revolt” (which will be described below)—even members who I have had no direct contact with. I am at the forefront, pulling in others. Yellow Springs is my home and the founding Chapter of the entire Hashlamah Project, so our influence is significant, even while all chapters are completely autonomous and self-initiated. My influence within the Yellow Springs Chapter, as well—when compared with that of the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem Chapters—reflects how much I am physically present in its activity. Still, while there is a degree of influence, I can informally

wield, I intentionally refrain from doing so and often caution all chapters and members I interact with to separate me, my personal politics and positions, from that of the group. The Hashlamah Project is more open and broadly inclusive than my specific views on a number of subjects and issues. My individual, rather nuanced, and eclectic views might be seen as controversial, or even militant by some, but they are only one small range on a spectrum of views held by Hashlamah Project participants. In the Yellow Springs Chapter alone, the range of diverse views and approaches is wide, with many being more obviously centrist than myself politically, and some more conservative. The range of religious observance in Yellow Springs chapters is also wide, with most generally expressing socio-religious culture more than intense, conservative religious practice. For most Jews in the Yellow Springs Chapter, religiousness means applying the social justice approach of Torah-based Judaism, more than it means particulars of daily ritual. For Muslims involved, this is also the case, but many participants still might be regarded as more religiously observant.

Many of activists involved in the Yellow Springs Hashlamah Project Study Circle worked with me in early 2016, creating a hashtag, #WhiteRoseRevolt—a reference to the resistance in Nazi Germany (Sachs, 2003, 2005). Within days, the concept was picked up by an anonymous “hacktivist” who I knew from Palestine. The “Red Cult” group of anonymous members from the largely Palestinian and Levantine “Red Cult” put out a video call to action along with a link to a “White Rose Society” page made largely by Jewish and Muslim members of the Yellow Springs Hashlamah Project Chapter. The script for the video was written by me, as was the group’s manifesto and founding documents.

The page received 10s of 1000s of followers after only a couple of days. There were dozens of mainstream new pieces written on it, in part because Donald Trump accused the

creator of the video (me and a friend from Palestine who goes by the designation “*Majhool*” or “Anonymous” in Arabic), of “hacking” his private cell phone to obtain information “doxxed”¹⁵ in the video pertaining to his contact information. This data, however, was obtained by a Palestinian Hashlamah member from a Russian website (perhaps ironically, long before the Russian hacking scandal emerged in headlines). Once I and another activist who participated in this study, were being more or less “closed in on” by law enforcement who was following us everywhere we went for days after the release of the video, Red Cult put out a follow-up video purporting to exonerate us of any criminal activity. There was never a claim made that the information was the result of a hack. That was Trump’s narrative. The video asserted that Trump’s response to our initial video foreshadowed the type of “police state” that he envisioned for the United States.

After the release of that video, several news organizations¹⁶ picked up the story again. Word apparently got back to law enforcement that they had no grounds to bring us in. This, however reassuring it ended up being, sent shock waves through the local Hashlamah Chapter, because so many were involved, even while only a couple of us were directly targeted for what seemed to be imminent arrest. The Yellow Springs Chapter was at the epicenter of all of this.

In studying the Yellow Springs Chapter, I focused on individuals who seemed to me and by their own assessment to have been heavily targeted as a result of our mutual work with the #WhiteRoseRevolt and the Hashlamah Project. Two of these individuals faced death threats, stalking, harassment, and doxxing of their home addresses on Neo-Nazi websites like

¹⁵ *Doxxing* refers to researching and publishing personally-identifying information on the Internet

¹⁶ This was covered through independent media, like The Anti Media, but was also picked up by many mainstream news outlets including the BBC who confirmed the follow-up exonerating me, by proving they could come up with most of the information—legally and within about an hour using Google. See “Anonymous Trump ‘Hack’” (2016).

Stormfront, which currently features no less than three threads dedicated to me and my family. While many of these activists were targeted for Hashlamah Project work, it seemed that the prominence of the White Rose activism was causing detractors to look into the people behind it and expose what they considered a “Jewish conspiracy.” White supremacists became our primary source of threats, more than any sort of religious extremists. They took particular offense to the fact that Jews and Muslims were working together with the Hashlamah Project. While there is no evidence of support for or protection of Muslims against Islamophobia in the United States from these groups, Neo-Nazi organizations routinely use Palestinian suffering to blanketly damn the Jewish community and implicate even liberal Western Jewry in the actions of the right-wing Israeli government (Weinthal, 2018).

With the Yellow Springs Chapter, to conduct this study, I began by sitting down with participants and assessing the composition of the Chapter, as all the Chapter members volunteered to participate. All participants agreed that the most striking change over the years of the Chapter’s existence was the involvement of more Muslims since the rise of the “Alt-Right” agenda and pro-Trump ideas permeating the United States. This external pressure was drawing more traditional members of often insular communities to reach out and accept the invitation to work together. Many liberal Jews in our surrounding Jewish community had begun taking a public stand against Islamophobia and getting out on the streets protesting Trump policies. Some of them gravitated to our study circle as a result.

Within the context of the interviews in this study and beyond, the research purpose in Yellow Springs was secondarily to identify the fears of remaining and new Hashlamah Project members, particularly since the targeting with the viral “hug” incident at the mosque counter protest (described in Chapter I), brought so much attention to our meetings, and the White Rose

activism of Hashlamah Project members. We then informally talked through their fears, while participants were able to compose possible working solutions to process these feelings.

The Participants and Their Stories

The participants in the study represented a cross-section of the participant demographics of the Hashlamah Project Chapters. This was not by design, but it was an interesting result that I noticed. There was a little bit of every group that each Chapter consisted of as if it seemed each felt they had a nuanced perspective that they wanted heard. Although the interviews were reluctantly technology facilitated rather than face-to-face, due to the earlier mentioned surprise “BDS Ban” on entry, the experiences they shared were rich and profound.

Tel Aviv participants. There were five participants from the Tel Aviv Study Circle who were interviewed for this study.

Tel Aviv Interview #1: Male, Jewish, Israeli citizen (TA1.MJI). Born and having lived his entire life in Israel, he has an interest in cross-pollination movements between Jewish Kabbalistic mysticism and Islamic Sufism, more specifically. His family is critical of his involvement with the Hashlamah Project, and he has not been able to get a consistent job because of his activism. He copes with threats by “compartmentalizing” activism from daily life and trying to be discreet.

Tel Aviv Interview #2: Male, Jewish, Israeli citizen (TA2.MJI). This participant has lived his whole life in the State of Israel, aside from mandatory service in the IDF. He emphasizes that he never directly interacted with Palestinians in a way that was unkind or oppressive. He did his time in the IDF and then got back to Israel to focus on his true loves of gaming and music. He is the grandson of a well-known Israeli figure, which does not make his activism any easier. After a while back in civilian life, he became a protester in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, traveling to

each protest for a series of large pro-Palestinian and peace marches and rallies, with participants numbering in the tens of thousands. He copes with threats by trying to “be prepared” for “any potential altercation.” For him, this has meant getting into weight training and physical fitness, learning martial arts, and obtaining a firearm permit for self-defense.

Tel Aviv Interview #3: Female, Jewish, Israeli citizen (TA3.FJI). Not all of the participants from Tel Aviv were from Israel, however. TA3.FJI is an American liberal Jewish woman, who immigrated to Israel. She feels that she was indoctrinated with racist biases against Arabs, and Islamophobic biases against Muslims from an early age. She copes with the threats she faces by challenging herself to boldly confront fears, face and defy them, extending an “olive branch to whoever it is causing me anxiety.”

Tel Aviv Interview #4: Male, Druze, Israeli citizen (TA4.MDI). Not all Israelis are as easily defined as Muslim, Jewish, Christian or atheist. A large number of the Arab Israeli population—150,000 in the north alone—is from the Druze community. The Druze are from an offshoot faith from Zaydi “Fiver” Shi`ism that became its own unique ethno-religious faith community, primarily in the Levant, centuries ago. This participant did not voice a specific method to coping with threats and seems to more or less suggest that he just pushes on in spite of them—perhaps to some degree ignoring or dissociating from them.

Tel Aviv Interview #5: Female, Jewish, Israeli citizen (TA5.FJI). This participant immigrated to Israel from the United States. She was raised in a strict, U.S. East Coast Orthodox Jewish family, which sought to shelter and keep her from outside ideas and influences. As a result, during her pre-immigration travels to Israel, she became close friends with many Palestinians, and even converted to Islam, before eventually returning to the Jewish community with what she considers a “synthesis” approach to both faiths, born of the historical

understanding she gained from participation in the Hashlamah Project. She confronts threats by constantly evaluating her fears and reminding herself that if she gives up and returns to the United States, then the Israeli government will have won.

Jerusalem participants. A total of eight participants were drawn from the Hashlamah Project Chapter of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem Interview #1: Female, Muslim, Israeli citizen (J1.FMI). Many Arab Israeli citizens are predominantly Palestinian Muslims. They became Israeli citizens when the State of Israel was established, because they did *not* flee during the wars of 1947–49. Yet, Israelis are told that the danger is from Palestinian descendants of those who did flee and seek refuge with family in neighboring areas—all of these Palestinians are denied the Right of Return, ensured by international law and the Geneva Convention. But if those families fled, how could they have been fighting Jews in the region? This tragic irony is rarely reflected upon by Israeli Jews on the political Right, but it is not lost upon Palestinian Israelis.

Still, while citizenship was granted to Palestinians within the borders of Israel when the lines were drawn up, and while on paper they have the same legal rights as Israelis of other nationalities and ethnographic-religious groups, in practice there are many formally legal ways in which they are marginalized, discriminated against and oppressed. J1.FMI saw this firsthand her whole life growing up in Israel; for her, she explains, “the *Nakbah* is going on still.” As a result, she confronts these threats by keeping a low profile with activism and using a pseudonym when working with the Hashlamah Project.

Jerusalem Interview #2: Male, Muslim, non-Israeli Palestinian commuter (J2.MMP). This Palestinian member of the Jerusalem Chapter primarily lives in Ramallah. He is employed by a Jerusalem facilitator and commutes for work and participation in the Study Circle there. His

mother is Palestinian Arab Muslimah and his father British Caucasian from a Christian background, though he converted to Islam. He copes with the threats he faces by defying them, saying “I don’t take threats very well . . . you have to live and do what you set out to do even if there is a risk.”

Jerusalem Interview #3: Male, Jewish, Israeli citizen (J3.MJI). This participant self-admittedly identifies as an eccentric member of the Jerusalem Chapter. He is part of the Brezlover Chassidic movement in Orthodox Judaism, who he says, are looked at as “the Hare Krishnas of Judaism.” He has gained inspiration and enrichment of his Chassidism by studying the Classical Medieval *Chassidut* (from which the later Chassidic movement of the Ba’al Shem Tov borrowed their name in the 18th century), academically referred to as “Judeo-Sufi” in orientation (Lobel, 2007; Loubet, 2000). He teaches yoga and utilizes meditation practices as well as what he calls “Bhakti Yoga” of “service to others,” like the elderly, combined with walking in Nature in order to cope with threats.

Jerusalem Interview #4: Male, Mizrachi, Israeli citizen (J4.MJI). This participant is from the Negev desert in Israel, but his family originally comes from Morocco. He explains that before the emergence of a uniquely Israeli culture, from the intermixing of Jewish communities who immigrated there or lived there already, his family referred to themselves as Jewish Arabs. Still, he held largely the same views as his Ashkenazi Israeli counterparts until living for a while in the United States after his IDF service where he was presumed to be an Arab and Muslim by both U.S. Arabs and Jews alike. This new perspective eventually led to him getting involved with the Hashlamah Project. He says he has no other choice but to persevere in spite of his fears, saying “I don’t believe I have any other choice. The right thing is rarely the easy thing. I could not change who I am now even if I wanted to.”

Jerusalem Interview #5: Female, Jewish, Israeli citizen, Women of the Wall activist

(J5.FJI). The well-known (or infamous, depending on your politics) Women of the Wall feminist organization is dedicated to equality in Jewish communities in general, and specifically at the Western Wailing Wall, or Kotel. Orthodox Judaism does not believe women should be allowed to wear a *Tallit Gadol* prayer shawl or *Tefillin* prayer boxes that men are required to wear in their communities for morning services. The women's response has been to make a very public protest of these attitudes by wearing such paraphernalia, or the typically male-worn *kipot* to the Kotel and praying at the Wall, often with a *Sefer Torah* (Torah Scroll), much to the dismay of the Orthodox gate keepers of the site, who have been empowered by the government to dictate how prayer is conducted there. She rejects "any societal forces or pressures that seek to maintain the status quo of misogyny or racism" and confronts the threats she faces, because she says there are ultimately only two choices: "resist or succumb."

Jerusalem Interview #6: Female, Jewish, Israeli citizen (J6.FJI). This participant was raised to view "every Arab" as "a potential terrorist." She still considers herself a Zionist but believes in a single federal state comprising three states, as a solution for the interests of all sides. Her family generally disapproves of her involvement in the Hashlamah Project, or with Arabs and Muslims in general. In spite of her activism and awareness of the *fatwah* issued against us, she is cautious but not extremely worried, as she does not feel she is high profile enough to be targeted. She copes with the threats she faces by persevering with the realization that "we are just sitting together and talking. If someone is going to kill us for that then they will kill us for anything we do. I cannot let this hold me back."

Jerusalem Interview #7: Female, Jewish, Gush Etzion Settler (J7.FJS). This participant, who lives in the Gush Etzion settlement, initially contacted me through email,

several years ago, requesting permission to set up a formal Hashlamah Project Chapter in the West Bank. She explained that the Gush Etzion settlement was lawfully purchased from Palestinians before 1948, that it was then stolen, to be later reclaimed during subsequent wars. In spite of this, I had to remind her that a formal Hashlamah Project Chapter in a settlement would be impossible. As such, she participates formally with the Jerusalem Chapter, and sets up informal study circles, inspired by the Hashlamah study circle in Jerusalem, with Gush Etzion. She perseveres in the face of threats because she says she has to be an example to others.

Jerusalem Interview #8: Male, Jewish, Israeli Citizen (J8.MJI). An immigrant from Ethiopia, who came to Israel in the 1980s with his family, this participant has experienced backlash for his activism on behalf of Palestinians. He has also experienced backlash due to being an outspoken organizer in the Ethiopian Jewish community helping put together and participating in many protests for true social equality and equal rights for his community. The oppression he has felt in Israel as an Ethiopian Jew has lent to feelings of empathy with the Palestinian people and sparked activism for them as part of an intersectional vision. He perseveres in the face of fears of the threats he faces, because of the support of various interrelated individuals, groups and the like, associated with other aspects of one intersectional struggle for equal rights and justice.

Yellow Springs participants. Five participants from the Yellow Springs Chapter of the Hashlamah Project were interviewed for this study.

Yellow Springs Interview #1: Male, Jewish (YS1.MJ). This participant is extremely active in leftist circles, particularly within anarchist and communist groups. When we conducted the interview, he was admittedly jaded and angry. He said he was “frustrated” by lack of acceptance of him as a Jew, and the historical struggles of the Jewish people, by many in the

pro-Palestine camp—even to the point of tolerating many Holocaust-deniers or being ones themselves. He was very leftist but now is gravitating to more right-wing positions, because he feels betrayed by Palestinians and others who claim to support the Palestinian cause, but who do not stand up for Jews facing antisemitism, and in some cases even perpetuate it. As for coping with threats and persevering, he says that he doesn't think he can.

Yellow Springs Interview #2: Male, Jewish (YS2.MJ). This participant was raised by Holocaust survivor grandparents who taught him that it is essential in Jewish living to stand up and speak out for any group of people facing any form of oppression. Honoring these lessons, he empathizes with the “perceived other.” Having been subjected to doxxing, which affected not only him directly, but also his family, he says that Neo-Nazis and the Alt-Right have posed the most significant threats for him. He perseveres because he has seen how White Supremacist groups are exploiting the Palestinian cause to pit Jews and Muslims against each other. “My grandparents did not escape the Nazis for me to let them [Neo-Nazis] rise up here and in my generation,” he told me. “That alone is enough to motivate me for the rest of my life.”

Yellow Springs Interview #3: Male, Muslim (YS3.MM). This participant's religious practice could be considered culturally Islamic, much in the same way that cultural Jews practice various religious holidays and festivals and speak with terms that socio-religiously emanate from Judaism. Still, as he explains, he is far from conservative and certainly not a fundamentalist. Family ostracism is a serious concern and threat, but primary threats he faces emanate from the Alt-Right, as well. As far as coping with threats and persevering, he says that “all I can do is be low key and do my thing.”

Yellow Springs Interview #4: Male, Jewish (YS4.MJ). This participant is the rabbi of a very progressive synagogue in a city and state which will not be specified. He is not from Yellow

Springs, nor the surrounding area, but has visited often and participates at times in our chapter. After speaking out against one of the frequent bombing campaigns by Israel against Gaza, some key local figures in the community influenced his termination. He says that he copes with these threats and perseveres by being “more careful with how I word things” and phrasing things Socratically to his current congregation, to leave room for implied plausible deniability.

Yellow Springs Interview #5: African American Male, Jewish (YS5.MJ). This participant, a long-time member of the Chapter, describes himself as a “Black Jew,” both because his mother is an Ashkenazi Jewish Israeli citizen who returned to the United States, and because the African American (he prefers the term “Black,” which I will use hereafter accordingly) side of his family, he believes, has ancestral Jewish and Israelite roots, from the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. He has lost a job that amply provided for himself, his mother, children “with money to spare” as a result of his vocal activism that resulted in being virally recognizable. He says that being Black in America has caused him to instinctively and naturally empathize with the plight of all oppressed peoples, including Palestinians. As for coping with threats, confronting fear, and persevering, he says: “I guess you could say that I have confronted fears by not thinking about them, which is not really a healthy approach.”

What Were the Themes?

I coded themes for each interview. At first, I identified five themes; in the second interview there were some of those five and 10 others not found in the first pass and so on. This section gives an aggregate overview with what each participant talked about thematically. These can roughly be summarized under three primary headings. Themes of the interview responses were all concerning survival—economic, social, familial, and physical. The themes were grouped broadly into two main categories: Threats and Ramifications, with two main sub-coded themes for

Threats to Life or Safety and No Threat to Life/Moderate Social Tension. In the second main category, which I refer to as Navigating and Coping With Threats, were three main sub-coded themes: Personal Psychological, Interpersonal—community or group solutions—and Preparedness and Training. Each of these were further subdivided, and then subdivided again, as reflected in the diagrams to be presented below.

Coding the Interviews

As previously mentioned, in coding the interviews, I called on the help of colleagues who had shown a continued interest in the Hashlamah Project's work and objectives and who have both lived in Israel. To check against my own bias and subjective analysis of the interviews, I asked Ashley Lackovich-Van Gorp, and Lisa Berkeley, both colleagues at Antioch University, to undertake their own coding of the interviews to check against mine.

In terms of positionality, Ashley is an international nonprofit professional working primarily with adolescent girls and young women. Her current work focuses on girls in Kenya. Having lived and worked for a total of three years in Jerusalem, she has a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of the conflict. Since her time there, she has continued to volunteer for causes related to peace and justice in the region. Before her PhD in Leadership and Change, (Lackovich-Van Gorp, 2014) she earned a Master's degree in interethnic relations, which enhances her understanding of dynamics of the conflict. At the same time, she is removed enough from the situation to see studies with an outsider perspective. Ashley thus seemed to have the perfect perspective to check for bias, by coding these interviews, as a whole, independent of me. She checked overarching reoccurring themes in all of the interviews and was asked to include what she saw as themes as they occurred across the board. To accomplish this, she decided to include themes that occur more than three times in each interview.

Lisa Berkeley, who defended her own dissertation in 2019, homed in on the themes more specifically as they relate to each question, rather than each individual—as I have. She expressed to me that her involvement reading through these interviews was a profound experience. “As someone who lived and worked in the peace movement in Israel [and] Palestine for nine years during the Second Intifada, I had some historical context and framework for the interview responses.” She added that she is “not new to the subject,” having been “teaching self-awareness, healing and alternative medicine, and communication/mediation techniques and practices” in Tel Aviv, between 1998 and 2007. Because both her Hebrew and Arabic are, by her own description “minimal” she usually worked with a translator. Personally, she experienced her own backlash while living and working in the region. During her time in Israel, she was “detained, harassed, had property (computer, CD player, cell phone) broken, broken into, and stolen by Israeli officials.” However, she said, “despite this, I never felt my life was endangered. The Palestinians took a greater risk than I, an American citizen living and working in Israel who was not an Israeli citizen, which made me that much more suspicious.” The experience of activism fatigue is very real to her, as she explains that she “also worked with many women who had been peace activists for between 10 and 30 years. Today, many of these women are no longer working in the movement because they are burned out and exhausted.”

Her methodological approach in the coding review was to read each interview and group key phrases, concepts or themes in each of the responses by question number. These were listed in the tables under each question. All of those who reviewed these interviews saw the risks being taken and the costs as centered around survival. Lisa broke these down specifically as follows:

- Economic (loss of jobs),
- social (loss of friends and community),

- familial (disowned or shunned by family), and
- physical (from injury to loss of life).

The primary themes remained remarkably consistent across the board, and are grouped as follows, according to each question asked. All in all, both Ashley and Lisa's coding overlapped my own, with a number of additional themes noted and coded for. As such, I have outlined all of this coding, using two graphics below: the first representing the Threats and Ramifications and the second representing Navigation and Coping with those threats.

Threats and Ramifications

Figure 4.1 details the threats and ramifications as determined from the interviews. In all, the category of Threats and Ramifications was easily divisible into Threats to Life or Safety and No Threat to Life/Moderate Social Tension. Subgroupings for both categories were broken down into Physical, Social, Financial and Psychological, in no particular order of importance.

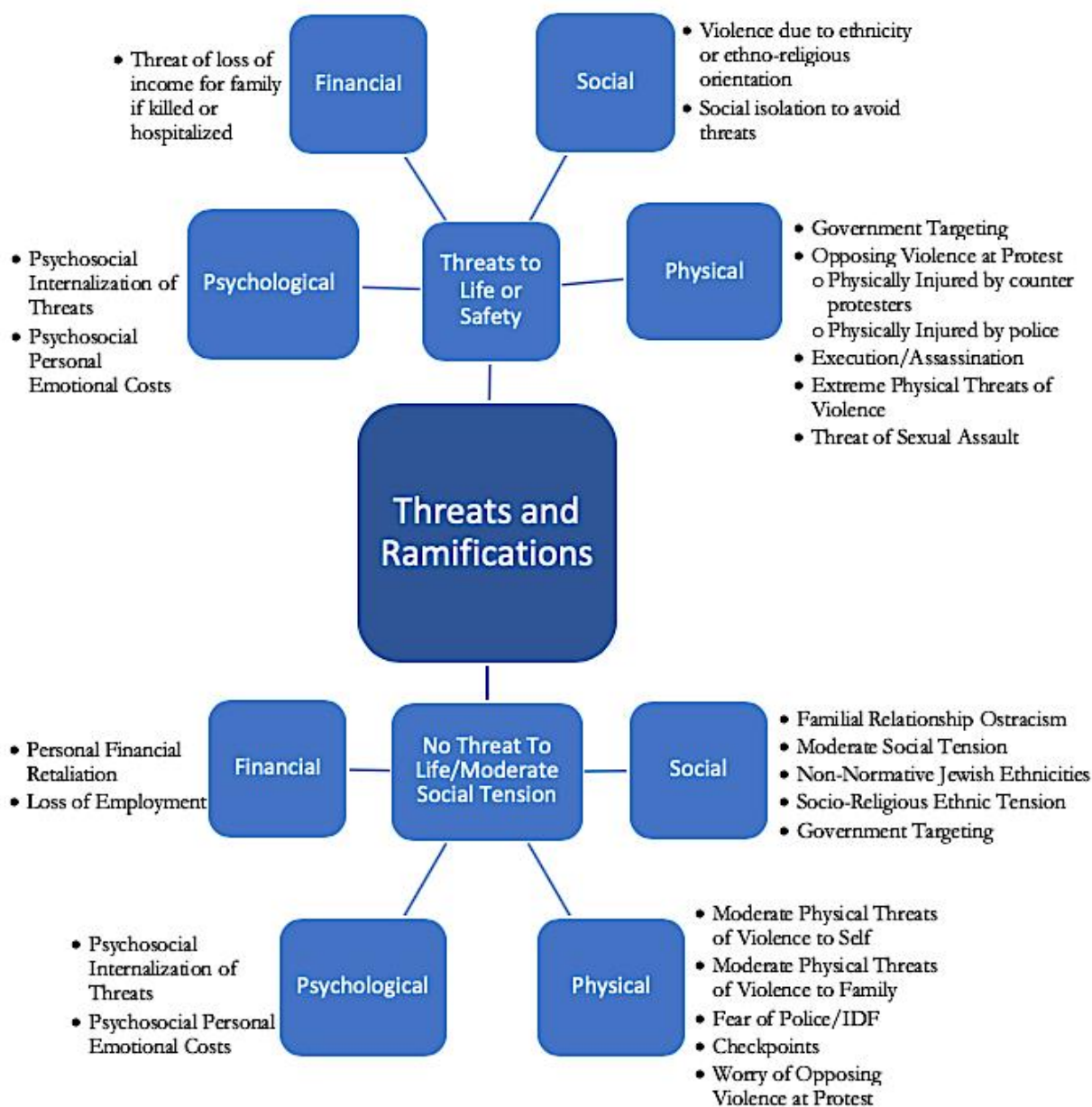


Figure 4.1. Overview of threats and ramifications described in interviews.

Threats to life and safety. In the case of No Threat to Life and Moderate Social Tension, the theme was focused primarily on the threats that one experiences interpersonally, socially, or familial, in terms of ostracism or job loss. In short, they are threats that do not typically assume danger to one's personal safety, freedom, or life. In this thematic grouping of interviews, however, the results were concerned with those who have found themselves facing those very sorts of

physical threats. The following list outlines the themes, sub-themes and so on which are subsequently discussed:

- Physical threats:
 - government targeting,
 - opposing violence at protest,
 - physically injured by counter protesters,
 - physically injured by police,
 - execution/assassination,
 - extreme physical threats of violence, and
 - threat of sexual assault extreme physical threats of violence.
- Social threats:
 - violence due to ethnicity or ethno-religious orientation, and
 - social isolation to avoid threats.
- Financial threats:
 - Threat of loss of income for family if killed or hospitalized
- Psychological threats:
 - psychosocial internalization of threats, and
 - psychosocial personal emotional costs.

Physical threats. The category of physical threats to life or safety was well-exemplified in the interview with J5.FJI, who stated that she faces “risks every time we get together to meet,” and that she “takes risks going places where the government and police tell me I am not supposed to go.” For her, this manifests primarily through their activity with both the Hashlamah Project as well a very controversial organization, basing their feminist activism in Jerusalem. “I

work with the Women of the Wall; a Jewish feminist organization fighting for the rights of women to pray and practice at the Kotel,” J5.FJI explained. Put simply, “we fight for religious pluralism and legal equality for women in Judaism and Israel.”

What this controversial activism looks like might shock non-Israelis who see no problem with their activities. J5.FJI stated, “We convene monthly at the Wall where we wear *tallit gadol* prayer shawls, sing prayers aloud, daven, and chant from the Torah.” While this may seem exactly like what it is—women *davening* at the focal point to which their religion directs prayers—“for the Orthodox overseers of human rights in Israel, these are acts relegated to men and forbidden to women.” As a result, they “have been arrested, and even had a case go all the way to the Supreme Court.”

In the case of TA5.FJI, activism made her a target for government accusations of “terrorism.” She explained that they were “accused of being a terrorist, being a traitor, of treason, even though I am not an Israeli citizen at the time.” No matter how much she tried to explain to authorities, her denials almost seemed to make things worse. “They subjected me to the most disgusting humiliation I could have imagined, all the while telling me I was planning on being a suicide bomber and calling me the worst things you could imagine.” It is hard to imagine being accused of something of this magnitude—an accusation that tends to be presumed as accurate in the eyes of the general Israeli population—until it happens to you, she explained. “These are the sorts of threats I didn’t even know existed until I was subjected to them.”

This incident was not an isolated anecdote. The interview with TA5.FJI revealed that, following two years of anti-colonial activism in the West Bank, along with taking *shahadah* (bearing witness to the principles of Islam), the participant found herself subjected to abject cruelty, sexual humiliation and assault by her interrogators and yet she decided to move back to

Israel permanently in order to confront the government, military, intelligence and law enforcement abuses.

Later, upon rejoining a Jewish community, marrying a Jewish man and more or less seeming like a Jew who came back to the *derekh* [strict adherence to the Jewish religious path] from a rebellious phase, I was granted citizenship here. Now why would I want to move to the place where I was subjected to so much humiliation and cruelty? For one, I love my Palestinian friends. They still view me as a *Muslimah* in spite of my practice of the Torah. They think it is strange and unnecessary for a Muslim, but I have not heard one of them say I left the fold of Islam.

The fears that she faces are not from Palestinians in the West Bank, but instead from the same soldiers and police that the Palestinian people also must confront fears of. “I certainly feel no fear” among Palestinians, she explains, “but I do feel tremendous fear and anxiety when I am near soldiers or police.”

Other government targeting can take a more bureaucratic turn. J1.FMI explained how the Israeli State apparatus used red tape, fine print, and legal argumentation, to punish by way of literally stealing property—and doing so technically “legally.” She added: “I worry that my house or my parents’ house will be stolen like my aunt’s was. They can come up with any excuse, any reason to steal from us even still. The *Nakbah* is ongoing still.”

These threats are not limited to Palestinians and those directly allying with them, or women fighting institutionalized patriarchal repression. Police, military and government threats are also coming down on Ethiopian Jews who are merely standing up for their right to be “non-Ashkenormative” in their Jewish ethnicity. In the interview with J8.MJI, I was told that solidarity across sub-ethnicities of Jewry, as well, as from Palestinians, has been a key feature of their resistance as well as their ability to persevere.

I have been supported by *Ashkenazim*, *S’fardim* and *Filistinim* when it comes to protests by my community. I have stood arm in arm with Ashkenazim, facing the police in the streets at the Jerusalem protest against police brutality, and also in Tel Aviv when we were blocking the Ayalon Highway.

In their interview, TA3.FJI explained the relationship between government, military and police repression and oppression, noting that “more than anything, engaging my fears in this way has allowed me to see the many ways which the government, police, military and more strip the dignity away from others. It makes me more cognizant of that.” Those “others” can refer to Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza, or to Israeli Palestinians, or Jews and others who are actively engaged in fighting the Israeli State’s actions. “They fear the same fear as me, but often more, and forcing them to endure situations that trigger these rational fears is itself a process of stripping them of their dignity. Something has to change.”

Some Hashlamah members spoke of facing violence in the course of protesting against the government’s actions publicly—as well as post-protest fallout in the forms of threats of extreme violence, execution or assassination. This can be broken down into Threats to Life or Safety of Individual or Family Members, Opposing Violence at Protest, including being Physically Injured by counter protesters, or Physically Injured by police; as well as Executions and Assassination by government or terrorist groups; Extreme Physical Threats of Violence and Threats of Sexual Assault/Rape, as well as the more recently emerging threat of doxxing.

One of the most shocking examples of all of these types of threats, as well as threats of sexual assaults, arose in the interview with TA3.FJI. She recounts: “I have begun writing editorials for various outlets, which receive wide circulation. Because of that wide reach, I have become the target of people who want to silence me.” She explained that often times,

it is threats of rape or murder—but usually rape; sometimes rape then murder—targeted towards me. Other times they will send me pictures of my children, or Google Maps of my house to intimidate me and show me that they know where I live. All of the threats I have received for my activism have come from other Israelis. The threats against my children are without a doubt the worst and what makes me feel like throwing in the towel sometimes.

In the interview, YS2.MJ elaborated that these “fears” are not simply fears when they are things you have seen firsthand can and do happen to you as a result of your activism. “The things I am afraid of,” he explained, “are often things that have already happened. Being the focus of Neo-Nazi doxxing has a list of problems created for me.”

In most of these cases, he explains, “boneheads” (by which he meant Neo-Nazi skinheads), “are cowards, so they do things like this to saber rattle and intimidate.” Still, “there could be the random new Hammerskin,” (the largest of Neo-Nazi self-described skinheads that rose to prominence in the 1980s, in contrast with traditional, anti-racist skinheads, which emerged from the British and Jamaican subcultures in the late 1960s), acting as a “Lone Wolf” terrorist, “who thinks they are going to rise up the ranks by going after someone their friends have doxxed.” As a result, “literally at any time a Nazi could drive to my house and ambush me. The same is true of my parents. All of this for being a visible face at protests.”

YS5.MJ explained how serious some of these physical threats can become once they are brought to fruition. He was not the only one from the Yellow Springs Chapter to say this, as YS1.MJ also relayed, “I have experienced death threats.” But in the account of YS5.MJ, is a terrifying story that bears full reproduction:

As you know, my mom is Israeli, and she wasn’t really too pleased about what she saw on her Facebook feed about me in articles and videos. She said other family members and her friends were harassing her about it, which is why I think she was more upset than people saying I was Muslim. I left her house that night and a car pulled up alongside me, as I walked down the street in [local city]. Two guys jumped out, but all I saw was one had a hammer and nearly beat me to death—leaving me for dead on the side of the road. I was messed up for months, had several surgeries and my hand still hurts even a year later, from how badly it was crushed.

As a result, he refuses to even call these “fears,” explaining, “that’s a real, credible threat. If I’m worried that someone might harm me because of activism, that isn’t just a fear, it is a fear of a credible threat—as circumstances have proven to me.”

Similarly, J6.FJI felt that fears “are usually just based on an unknown, uncertainty of what *could* happen, even if the possibility is remote. A credible threat is something else.” She cited the aforementioned *fatwah* against members of the Hashlamah Project.

Years back, we were given a copy of the *fatwah* made against the Hashlamah Project. That seemed like a credible threat. The Shaykh said our “blood is *halaal*” meaning that it was permissible to kill us. That is a real threat. Thankfully no one was ever hurt, and I am told that Shaykh disappeared.

In the interview TA5.FJI spoke of violent, sexual assault coupled with interrogation by agents of the Israeli state. She recounted her horrific experience, saying “over the course of my travels to and from the West Bank,” which were associated with her eventual taking of *shahadah* and being seen as a “terrorist race-traitor apostate,” she was “detained, and violated by Israeli officials.” She explained,

I was first arrested while trying to go to Ramallah, simply to visit my friends, and then I had my head covered in a hood. I was strip searched. My vagina and anus were “inspected.” And I was handcuffed completely naked, with my eyes covered, to a cold metal chair and interrogated for hours.

Social threats. Under the category, Social Threats, there were two primary themes:

Violence Due to Ethnicity or Ethno-Religious Orientation; and Social Isolation to Avoid Threats.

The first, Violence Due to Ethnicity, was found with every Palestinian I interviewed, as well as in the cases of the two Black Jews from Israel and the United States who were interviewed.

TA2.MJIC recalled a protest in Haifa, where anti-racist, pro-Palestinian protesters were confronted by fascist counter-protesters who were openly threatening the lives of Arabs in attendance, demonstrating arm-in-arm with Jewish peace activists. “JDL terrorists chanted ‘death to Arabs’ as well as ‘Muhammad is dead’ and ‘we’ll burn down your villages’” In the United States, YS5.MJ explained that the threats he faces are amplified by his ethnicity. “I’m a Black Jew living in the Midwest. I don’t know what it’s like not to feel vulnerable, just driving to the store to pick up some milk and eggs.”

Financial threats. Financial threats were just as common but didn't seem to correlate with any particular demographic. The threat of loss of income for family if killed or hospitalized, was the primary concern, especially for those participants with children. TA3.FJIC noted that the financial threats of loss of income for her family if harm came to her is particularly troubling. "The threats against my children are without a doubt the worst and what makes me feel like throwing in the towel sometimes."

Psychological threats and internalized oppression. Under psychological concerns, the presence of Psychosocial Internalization of Threats as well as Psychosocial Personal Emotional Costs was essentially common to all. TA3.FJIC noted that "the biggest threats to our safety are the unknown things." Drawing the issue back to resistance struggles in both regions, YS5.MJ explained,

There are rules of war in Islam or Judaism for that matter. But both recognize the right to defend yourself and your family. Still, when an elephant is raised in a captivity, the circus ringleader or zoo-keeper will tie a small rope to their leg so they can't run off. As they get older, they keep the same rope. The elephant matures, grows incredibly strong, but it believes it still cannot break that rope, so when they pull against it and feel the tension, they back off right away because they are sure they can't succeed at freeing themselves.

No threats to life/moderate social tension. This theme is about the degree of safety, tension or threat which participants felt exposed to because of their Hashlamah Project activities. The heading of *No Threats to Life/Moderate Social Tension*, is broken down into four themes, each with several sub-themes, discussed and exemplified following the list.¹⁷

- Physical threats:
 - moderate physical threats of violence to self,
 - moderate physical threats of violence to family,

¹⁷ Themes are capitalized and italicized in the ensuing discussion; sub-themes are italicized but not capitalized.

- fear of police/IDF,
- checkpoints, and
- worry of opposing violence at protest
- Social threats:
 - familial relationship ostracism,
 - moderate social tension,
 - nonnormative jewish ethnicities,
 - socio-religious ethnic tension, and
 - government targeting.
- Financial threats:
 - personal financial retaliation, and
 - loss of employment.
- Psychological threats:
 - psychosocial internalization of threats, and
 - psychosocial personal emotional costs.

Physical threats (not to life). Pertinent to *moderate physical threats of violence to self*, is the account of TA2.MJI, who explained that

threats can happen any time, not just at protests. I literally believe we are risking our lives doing this work, but it is something which we must do . . . the very fact that we have a choice and that Palestinians do not, should keep us constantly aware that things are seriously wrong in this country and in the world, and it is our responsibility to do the right thing.

With respect to Moderate Threats, examples like YS2.MJI illustrate “a lot of credible threats” and fears that can simply be “going out to check the mail or wondering why the car behind me turned three times in a row following me.”

Another example of such moderate threats to safety, was illustrated in the interview with J2.MMP, who said that the threats he faced were, “mostly just of being killed . . . I could be killed even crossing here to come to meetings. These checkpoints are like crossing over the Bridge of *Sirat*,” a Sufi concept of the Qur’anic “straight path” or “*Sirat al-Mustaqim*,” a sort of metaphysical, meditative bridge of inner progress, while facing external threats. J2.MMP added:

It’s a narrow thing. You can fall off at any minute. You can die at any moment. I can be killed by a soldier or police officer at any time. All they have to do is make something up and no one will care. What will we do? Nothing. Mourn. Call me a *shahid*. Okay. But what does that do? Nothing. They know they can kill us and get away with it.

Most of what I am terming moderate physical threats came in the form of *moderate physical threats of violence to family; fear of police and/or IDF; checkpoints; and worry of opposing violence at protests*. In the case of the latter, there were many startling examples. In interview TA1.MJI recounted that they “have been to some protests where there have been right wing counter protesters who have threatened us in person.” But, he states, “aside from a few minor skirmishes though, nothing has carried over into my day to day life.” TA2.MJI told that the protests were a space for solidarity and intersectionality. “As I got older and began working as an activist I have marched in Jerusalem alongside Arabs, demanding equal rights for my neighbors. [But it wasn’t long] after attending two very large protests in Tel Aviv and Haifa, [that] the threats began.”

But the threats didn’t just start after the protests; they were present at the protests themselves, particularly since these large rallies were garnering so much attention in Israel, even if much foreign media ignored them. “Even at these protests the risks were real,” said TA1.MJI. The overlap of threats at protests, with the threat of police and military in general was indeed very real. TA1.MJI recounted: “The police stood by and let [Jewish Defense League] terrorists

pin down an Israeli citizen of Haifa for nothing more than peacefully protesting. He was one of many hundreds of Jewish and Muslim protesters who turned out.”

TA2.MJI further explained that

cities like Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa also had huge protests, all with hundreds and some cases thousands in attendance. Police arrested nearly 30 Israeli protesters in Haifa when we attempted to ward off self-described “Jewish Defense League” members who crashed the protest . . . literally “crashed” the protest by hurling bottles, rocks and fists.

He added that “instead of arresting the JDL terrorists the police turned on the peace protestors, forcing them to stay in the area where they would be hit by the JDL terrorist assaults, and refusing to arrest even one JDL member.”

For TA2.MJI, the collusion between the police and Israeli nationalists was clear. He recalled,

The JDL terrorists chanted “death to Arabs,” as well as “Muhammad is dead”—an ominous, yet odd statement, since Muslims don’t have any sort of Christian belief in Muhammad having survived death. They also chanted “we’ll burn down your villages,” but the anti-war demonstrators replied with “Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies.” Israeli anti-fascist activists were there to tangle with the JDL terrorists and take back the streets from the right-wing hawks.

While the aftermath was not the origin of the threats he faced, it was the most intense, he explained.

People saw me on television at one of the rallies. This caused many more hardline relatives to come at me directly and angrily. At school the people who did not agree with us ostracized me—even people who I had formerly considered myself “friends” with.

Related to these sorts of post-protest social threats is the emerging threat of doxxing. The Yellow Springs Chapter experienced a significant amount of this. YS2.MJ explained, “I do risk my safety and life doing this type of activism. Like you I have been the target of doxxing by Stormfront, I have also been doxed repeatedly and my parents have been harassed.” Family members were affected as well, and even targeted to put pressure on seemingly unbreaking

activists. “My mother was actually terrorized after the doxx, at her place of employment. For nearly a week she was certain she was going to be fired, but thankfully she was not.”

Social threats (not to life). When some relatives saw a number of participants on the news, and in articles, the threat of familial relationship ostracism arose. TA1.MJI explained that “some of my family thinks I am lost” because of his views on the relationship between Judaism and Islam as co-existing, sister-faiths, so to speak. “I believe the Qur’an is a sacred text for the nations and that Muslims are okay to live as neighbors to Jews. But family will sit and discuss with me and listen to me in some cases.” Still, while some are willing to listen, “employers do not.”

Family relationship ostracism was a major reoccurring theme among nonlethal social threats. J6.FJI explained,

Mostly, the risks [of activism] are being disowned by my family. My father knows a little about what I do, and he does not like it. It is a source of embarrassment and shame for him, instead of something I believe he should be proud of me for. He hides it from other relatives and never asks me about anything. My main risk is being treated badly by my family.

J5.FJI recounted that having “an angry man coming up and sucker punching me at a protest” or “being spat on” were par for the course. They referred to this as, “oh, the usual, you know.” Finally, the most common threat they said they faced was “having family members tell me I am a disgrace or a trouble-maker.”

J1.FMI said that even open participation in this study would pose a risk of familial ostracism.

Even talking to you is a risk. If my parents found out about my involvement with Hashlamah they would be mad. If I told them what it was about and that it is Jews and Muslims on equal footing, they would say “why is the name [Hashlamah Project] Hebrew then?” It’s a good question; but I have told friends before who have asked about what we do that it is because it is sending a message to Jews. Hashlamah isn’t about telling the Palestinian people how to behave, it is about telling Israelis that we are human beings.

In the United States, the threat of family relationship ostracism was still very real, particularly within Jewish families. YS1.MJ explained, “I’ve given up countless opportunities [for employment and advancement] and become an outcast in my family.” Further, he noted that he had been “essentially kicked out of the synagogue I grew up in.” Several family members “deliberately exclude me from being informed of get-togethers—or sometimes outright lie and say they were canceled.”

YS3.MM said that they “take many risks.” First and foremost, however, was that

there are family members who would be very upset to know that I come and sit and drink with Jews. It is sad but it is true. My parents, not so much, but I have relatives who would never speak to me again for this. They would say that I am a Zionist, that I am not following the *deen*, that I am forbidden from taking Jews as friends, even though this is based off of them incorrectly interpreting a word in the Holy Qur’an.

Moderate social tension was faced by TA2.MJI, who recounted,

When I first began to speak up for the Arabs, the risks I took were limited to getting yelled at or argued with by various relatives. Some of my ideas were seen as “impractical” or “extreme” like letting people who lived here come back if they want to.

Nonnormative ethnicities was a recurring theme, crossing over categories. YS3.MM said,

Any other threats I face would be normal racism and Islamophobia that is so common here. I don’t think my activism makes me more of a target to Islamophobes, because they already think of me as a terrorist for being brown and Muslim.

But the same threats were faced by Jews as well. J8.MJI, an Ethiopian participant, explained,

My family came to Israel in the 80s because we were seeking refuge from threats we faced in Africa. Growing up here I have not stopped facing threats. I have faced threats [primarily] from Ashkenazim. As it is, I am already a second-class citizen because Israelis are racist. That is the sad reality. I hear “*Arabush*” as often directed towards Palestinians as I do “*Kushi*.” While *Kush* is not a bad word, Ethiopian Jews are strongly offended by the term and say that *kushi* is the Israeli equivalent of the N-Word in American vernacular. We are already treated like we are not Jewish enough, or not even Jewish at all. Imagine you are a racist Israeli who sees a *ye-Ityoppya Ayhudi* eating, praying and acting normal with Muslims?

This combination compounds the threats faced.

We become the epitome of everything they hate: friend of the Muslims, *kushi*. How do you think they will treat me then? Worse than they already do. I can tell you this because I have experienced it already many times.

The theme of threats against nonnormative ethnicities resonated with J3.MJI as well, who explained, “I wouldn’t so much say that I have actual fear of these things—more that I am aware that they are possible.” For them, “backlash is okay,” because they expect to face trials, as part of their spiritual path. “I am a Breslover. We are looked at like the Hare Krishnas of Judaism by some. I am already ostracized by nonreligious circles (which is most of Israeli society).”

Even within their own Chassidic sect, he is seen as strange.

I also teach yoga, so many *charedim* see me as bizarre or even engaged in something wrong already. It is part of the same universalism that led me to invest my life in yoga that causes me to see a pluralistic vision of how Jews and Muslims can live and even worship together, as we did in the Rishonic Period [approximately during the 11th to 15th centuries Common Era].

A Jew of Moroccan background, J4.MJI recounted, “my family comes from Morocco . . . they saw themselves as Arabs, Jewish Arabs. But that means that many Ashkenazim look at me and have to assess whether I am a Jew or an Arab.” While living in the United States, he quickly realized that assumptions of “looking Jewish” seem to be somewhat unique not only in various regions of Israel, but also in the United States, which is incredibly Ashkenormative. He said,

After serving in the IDF I worked a kiosk in a mall in the United States. There I would see someone with a kippah and would say *shalom `alaykhem* to them and they would look at me strange, like I was some brown lady trying to get information from them. In Israel, we are used to Jewish, Jewish, Jewish. In the United States I was hoping to connect with other Jews. That didn’t work so well. I quickly gave up going to the Chabad synagogue, which was the biggest around me. No one said anything specifically, but I was stared at constantly. I was often asked—before or after services: “are you Jewish?” I would say: “Do a lot of people who aren’t Jewish show up here or something?”

“To them,” he explained, “I was an Arab. My grandfather told me that before *Medinat Yisrael*, *Mizrachim* like us called ourselves Arabs too. We didn’t think anything of it.” He recounted something he had learned from his Hashlamah Study Circle, noting that

the word Arab and the word “*Evri*” [in Hebrew], are the same three letters. As you know, in our language if letters are the same that means something, it isn’t just coincidence. The root is the same. The meaning origins are the same.

He thus surmised that Jews in general, “didn’t see it as ‘Jews and Arabs’” as much “back then.” Instead, he said,

We saw more in terms of what community one belonged to: Arab Muslim, Arab Christian, Arab Jew. With *Medinat Yisrael* we became a new identity, really a new race. Like they say in America about the ‘Melting Pot,’ it is more that was in Israel. There are Ashkenazim and *S’fardim* and *Mizrachim* but most people who see themselves as Ashkenazim have an Arab Jewish relative. We are a new identity, not an old one. In Israel no one says ‘are you Jewish’ to me. In America, I can introduce myself as Jewish and people will look at me from the side of their eyes, like I am trying to trick them.

He further stated,

Being mistaken for an Arab Muslim in their company has really affected me. It has not been a daily occurrence, but it has happened many times. At that moment I am a Muslim in the eyes of Israelis who see me with them. Unless I were to wear an Ashkenazi *kippah* or *tallit*, no one would think my background and religion are different from theirs. If I were to tell them, they may even hate me more. So this has caused me to walk in their shoes at least for the moments I walk with them. This naturally creates empathy with Palestinians.

In Tel Aviv, TA4.MDI explained similar experiences, noting, “I am not like a regular Israeli in that I am from a *Derzi* (Druze) family. We have been here all along. In general, most Muslims do not look at us as Muslims at all.” Although Al-Azhar of Egypt recognizes them as one of the Islamic sects akin to Shiite Muslims—something which not so many Sunnis seem to agree with. He explained that they (the Druze),

have integrated into Israeli politics and public service. We serve in the IDF and we too are culprits in the occupation. But our presence and role is an inconvenient truth that demonstrates just how complex and nuanced this conflict is. It is not Europeans versus Arabs. We are Arabs. Many Israeli Jews I know are only part or not at all European.

TA4.MDI further elucidated that their key role in the Israel-Palestine conflicts highlights how this is not an issue that can be easily color-coded, as many in the West seem to assume. “Maybe in 1948 it was more like people say, but since then the demographics here have been very different. It isn’t ‘White people’ occupying the land of ‘Brown people.’” He suspects the Western way of framing the conflict is a result of American leftists seeing things through the cultural spectacles of their own nation’s racial politics.

That is such an American way of looking at things: everything is black and white. Everyone is Brown or White. Much of the IDF are people who look identical or even darker than most Palestinians. Yes, there are some White European completely Ashkenazim here, but to tell the truth, they are the vast minority.

In the United States, YS5.MJ said that as “a Black Jew living in the Midwest,” he doesn’t “know what it’s like *not* to feel vulnerable, just driving to the store to pick up some milk and eggs.” He explained that his “minority” status in the United States makes his position one of an “American ‘Untouchable’,” referencing the Indian caste system. He said that this “naturally causes me to empathize with oppressed peoples throughout the world.”

Listening to the other side increases that empathy and highlights the intersectionality of these cases for him. YS5.MJ explained,

Just sitting and listening to some members of our group talk about their experiences growing up or traveling back to Palestine, and sharing my own experiences as a Black man, sort of swaps honoring the dignity of Palestinians, with them honoring my dignity, hearing my story, and realizing that things aren’t that much different in the hood here than in the West Bank.

He said he realized that

some people might be offended by that, but it’s the truth. We have an occupying army on our streets too and they can shoot and kill us any time they want and just make up some bullshit to justify it. People march, people share articles and videos about it, but who is really stepping up to say enough is enough? It’s the same here with Black folks, or in Palestine. They could rise up against the settlers easily, and I don’t mean just randomly attacking people.

This *socio-religious ethnic tension* was further illustrated by TA4.MDI who explained:

Because of the community I belong to, and the fact that there are so many *Duruz* Zionists, my interactions with Palestinian Muslims are often more volatile than those between Israeli Jews and them. We are Palestinians too though, but we are not regarded as it because we have a different religion, different customs, and we decided to accept that the nation of Israel was created.

Financial threats (not to life). Under the coding of *Financial Threats* were two main sub-themes evident in interviews: *personal financial retaliation* and related to it, *loss of employment*. In Tel Aviv, TA1.MJI said that, apart from all the family and government threats, “the big problem has been holding down a steady job.” He explained being worried that

as long as I am involved in activism like this, I will not be able to get a job, even in Tel Aviv where you might think of people as being generally more liberal. I have been fired from many jobs already because someone finds out that I was at a Palestinian rally, or that I visited the West Bank to break bread with friends and make salat together. Sometimes, like certain family members, they simply hear that I do not think Muslims and Islam are evil and that is enough. They find the flimsiest of excuses to fire me the same week.

Far from being restricted to Israel, this was a problem American Jews spoke of as well. In Yellow Springs, YS4.MJ told of a frustrating confrontation between the leader of a Jewish congregation and its board. He explained,

I’m a rabbi of a very progressive temple. But even as progressive as it is, I was fired from a congregation during the last major summer bombing campaign in the Gaza Strip. I spoke out against the war . . . I felt this was my moral obligation as a rabbi, and more fundamentally as Jew.

He said that the congregation itself “was divided into two responses: aghast in horror and thoughtfully reflecting on what was said [but that] it was only days until I was notified that I was being replaced, after many years of happy service to that community.” The pressure on the board came from a small number of congregants, but one of them owned the property which the congregation leases for worship, and greatly outstrips others in terms of annual donations to the synagogue. “[A key figure in the community] threatened to leave with his family if I was not replaced. The board conceded to his demands and I was out.”

As with his termination from his previous place of employment, he said,

I worry that I am just one “wrong” sermon away from being fired again. Imagine: saying that we should not bomb hospitals and schools and children playing on beaches is something viewed as “controversial.” That is a sad state of affairs indeed for the Jewish people.

In Yellow Springs as well, YS5.MJ lost gainful employment as a result of his activism.

“I’ve been to a lot of protests with you and I think we have both become way too high-profile names and faces.” A particularly large anti-fascist, anti-Trump protest he attended got a lot of viral attention at in 2016. YS5.MJ reported: “We were interviewed by every news outlet in the world. I knew the risks were there, but at the time I don’t think I was thinking about them as much as I have in hindsight.” As a result, he lost his previous managerial position.

After that protest went viral. Everyone looked at me strange when I came in to work, and my regional supervisor was there. He asked, with a disturbed tone in his voice: “I thought you were Jewish. These articles show you with a Muslim hat on and they say you are Muslim now.”

Since then he has not been able to find similarly steady gainful employment.

Psychological threats (not to life). Under this theme, are two primary categories:

psychosocial internalization of threats and *psychosocial personal emotional costs*. J6.FJIC noted that these costs “are usually just based on an unknown, uncertainty of what *could* happen, even if the possibility is remote.” Even before their activism, this manifested with general social internalization of perceived threats. “When I was younger, I saw a terrorist behind every corner.”

YS2.MJ noted that Israel as a nation was “shaped by their PTSD from the Holocaust. That doesn’t excuse it, but they saw everything as an existential threat to the Jewish people. Everywhere they looked all they saw were enemies seeking to destroy them.” With respect to *psychosocial internalization of threats*, in Jerusalem, J1.FMI asked, almost angrily, “*Shu?*” (Palestinian colloquial for “what?”). She added vehemently, “I risk everything.” This perspective was reflected by all Muslim participants, and in some cases, Jewish ones as well, but J1.FMI

commented most directly and poignantly. “Really, I am not exaggerating, I am a second-class citizen here. Just going outside of my [Muslim] neighborhood, I am taking risks.”

Navigation and Coping With Threats

The second broad coding that emerged from the thematic analysis of the data had to do with *Navigating and Coping With Threats*. Related themes and strategies are diagrammed in Figure 4.2.

Coding is an analytical instrument or strategy, but it is not a goal in itself. Themes are important findings, represented in the schema below in a transparent way. This broad category included three subthemes in categorizing and analyzing these themes: The Personal Psychological domain which holds three further divisions of *psychological and physical health* (included sub-coding of *self-care* and psychologically confronting Vulnerability and how this can catalyze empathy with the perceived other). Following this was Interpersonal, Community or Group Solutions and Preparedness and Training.

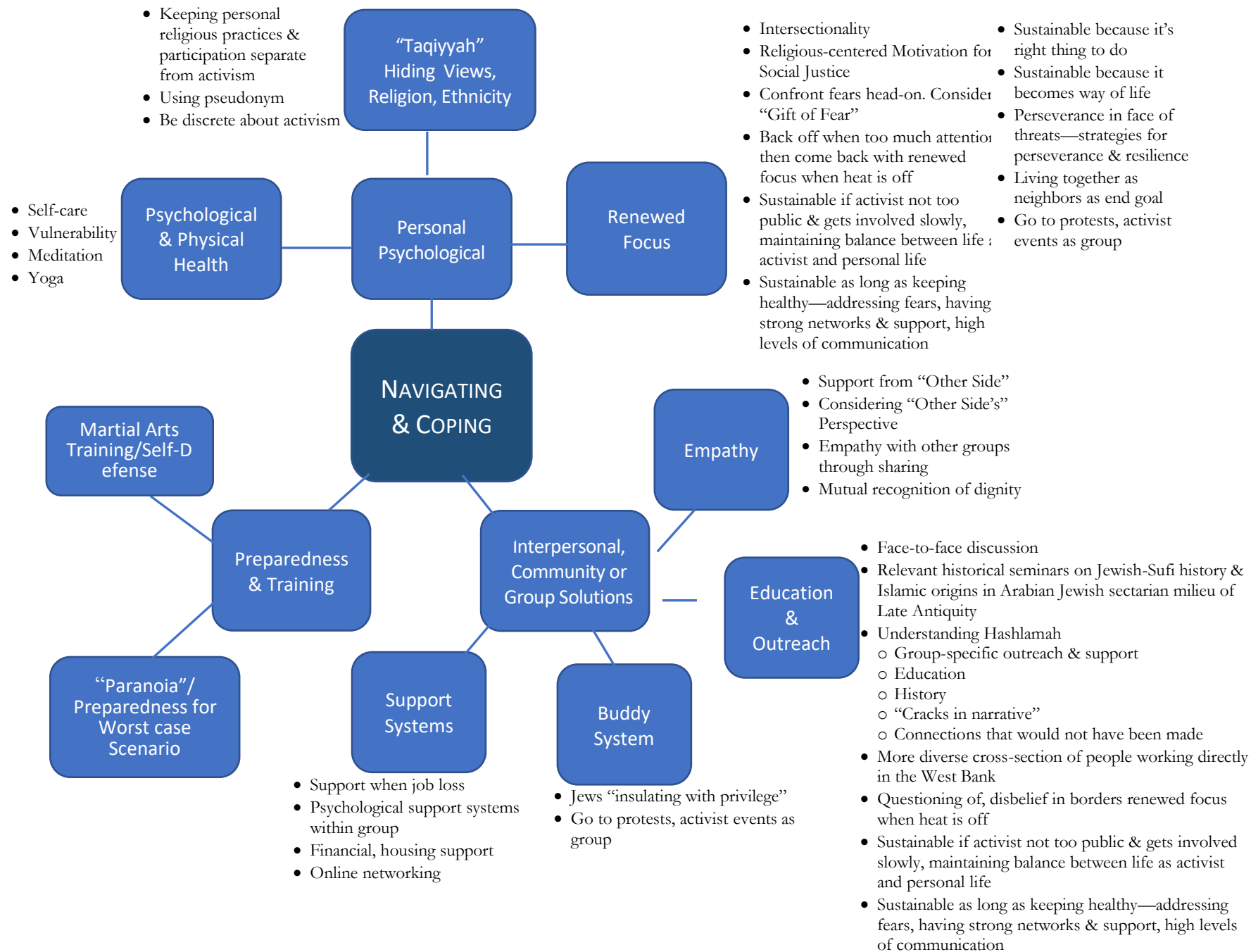


Figure 4.2. Overview of navigating and coping mechanisms as identified in interviews.

The following list outlines the themes, sub-themes and so on, for Navigation and Coping With Threats, which are then subsequently discussed.¹⁸

- Personal psychological:
 - “taqiyyah”/hiding views, religion, ethnicity,
 - keeping personal religious practices and participation separate from activism,
 - using pseudonym,
 - being discrete about activism, and
 - psychological and physical health:
 - self-care,
 - embracing vulnerability,
 - meditation, and
 - yoga.
- Renewed focus:
 - intersectionality,
 - religious-centered motivation for social justice,
 - confront fears head on/consider the “gift of fear,”
 - back off when too much attention, then come back with renewed focus once heat is off,
 - sustainable as long as activist is not too public and gets involved slowly, maintaining a balance between their life as an activist and personal life,

¹⁸ To bring out the themes, sub themes, and further sub-levels for Navigating and Coping in the following discussion, main themes are capitalized (title case) and italicized; all subsequent levels of sub-themes are in lower case italics.

- sustainable as long as keeping healthy—addressing fears and having strong, networks and support, high levels of communication,
- sustainable because it is the right thing to do,
- sustainable because it becomes your way of life,
- perseverance in the face of threats—strategies for perseverance and reasons for resilience, and
- “living together as neighbors” as an end goal.
- Interpersonal community or group solutions:
 - Empathy:
 - Support from other side,
 - considering perspective of other side,
 - empathy with other groups through sharing, and
 - mutual recognition of dignity.
 - Buddy system at protests:
 - Jews “insulating with privilege,” and
 - go to protests and activist events as a group.
 - Education and outreach:
 - face-to-face discussion, and
 - relevant historical seminars on Jewish-Sufi history and Islamic origins in Arabian Jewish sectarian milieu of late antiquity.
 - Understanding of Hashlamah:
 - group-specific outreach and support,
 - education,

- history,
- “cracks in the narrative,”
- connections that would not have been made,
- more diverse cross-section of people working directly in the West Bank, and
- questioning of and disbelief in borders.
- Support systems:
 - support when there is job loss,
 - psychological support systems within group,
 - financial or housing support, and
 - online networking.
- Preparedness and training:
 - “paranoia”/preparedness for worst case scenario, and
 - martial arts training/self-defense.

Navigation and coping with threats: Personal/psychological. Various dimensions of *personal psychological* comprise the first of three main sub-themes for *Navigation and Coping*.

Interviewed in the United States, YS2.MJ explained that he is “a target of Nazi boneheads,” the term that traditional Anti-racist “SHARP” (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice), as well as many Antifa and general leftists in the punk music scene, use to refer to Neo-Nazi Skinheads. This targeting by “boneheads [is] because of the combination of my activism and my Jewishness. Boneheads don’t go after every Jew; but they do go after those of us who they think make too much noise. Being in this position of vulnerability.” He added: “It helps me to understand what Palestinians feel.”

In Jerusalem, J3.MJI theorized that “vulnerability and empathy are cornerstones to understanding each other and moving forward. When we build up walls around ourselves (or our nations), we do so because we fear vulnerability.” The answer, he suggested, is not to suppress the fear, or try to ignore it. “Instead, we should embrace it. We are vulnerable.” There is no getting around the reality of this vulnerability. He argued: “The right thing is rarely the easy thing. It would be easy to put up a wall and not be vulnerable and open to others, to growth, to learning, understanding, wisdom. But that would not be the right thing.” J3.MJI further noted,

By embracing vulnerability, we can better empathize with others who have been put in vulnerable positions. We are putting ourselves in a vulnerable position. That is okay. We are vulnerable to many factors and influences in life. What matters is that we live in an upright manner and pursue the work of *tiqqun*,” or “fixing” and “healing” the world.

In Yellow Springs, YS4.MJ affirmed,

We must never lose sight of our inherent vulnerability. We all know the “punched in the gut” feeling that is the result of being mistreated or neglected, experiencing this should allow us to empathize through reflection. It is up to us all to honor other peoples’ dignity—particularly that of oppressed, or marginalized groups. In the process, we all strengthen ourselves.

In Jerusalem, J5.FJI theorized that “women are better at this than men, if I might say so.”

That is because, as she noted,

In general, we are more willing to let our emotional guard down and confess our fears to each other, say that we are scared or cry. Too many men—even activists—refuse to do any of that. They bring their often toxic masculinity into their activism—even those with the best of intentions who believe that they are not.

Admitting to and *embracing vulnerability* is an obstacle that is as necessary to navigating these threats as it is difficult to do. To that end, some activists have found *meditation* and *yoga* to be useful psycho-spiritual tools in adapting and evolving with the reality of the threats we face.

In Jerusalem, J3.MJI told me: “I meditate. I practice yoga. I take a walk in nature. I help the elderly [and through this] I remind myself of what is real.”

Sometimes, however, it is not enough to just address these fears and “evolve.” In many cases, the threats can be so real that they require completely or partially *hiding one’s views* on religion, or the reality of one’s ethnicity, heritage, or religious community. For the Druze people, as for normative historical and modern forms of Shi`ism, this means the concept of “*taqiyyah*.”

In Tel Aviv, TA4.MDI explained,

Because of the community I belong to, and the fact that there are so many *Druze* Zionists, my interactions with Palestinian Muslims are often more volatile than those between Israeli Jews and them. We are Palestinians too though, but we are not regarded as it because we have a different religion, different customs, and we decided to accept that the nation of Israel was created.

Because of this, he explained, “I do not tell people I am *Derzi* until I get to know them well. But this is the normal way of *taqiyyah* I was raised with.” To him, this is not simply about hiding though.

Taqiyyah means diplomacy. It means, you don’t tell people things that you know would make them upset or offend them. A particularly poignant *hadith* narration from the fifth Shi`i Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, tells us “he who has no *taqiyyah* has no religion,” and “he who conceals his religion has saved it, and he who makes it public has destroyed it.” The Shi`i exegesis *Tafseer al-Askari*, it is further said that “a believer who does not practice *taqiyyah* is like a body without a head.”

Sometimes the reasons for *taqiyyah* are even more complicated; in the interview with J7.FJS—who identifies as an “ethical settler” and who lives in a settlement on property that was purchased by Jews from Palestinians before the 1947–1949 wars—stated: “I am a very secretive person about meetings. Initially there were five people at Gush Etzion who wanted to form a Hashlamah Chapter.” The issues were one we as a group had not faced before, as we had never thought of settlers being interested in the concept of Hashlamah. Thus, “people who had been involved longer said that the Hashlamah Project itself could not endorse a chapter in the West Bank as long as there is the occupation.” While there are few things that we have to be rigid on, the association of the Hashlamah concept with settlements is simply impossible. “I understand

that point of view, as do the others. So, we work with the Jerusalem Chapter. In Israel we are much more open about what we are doing.” They do meet in the West Bank, as well, but not under the banner of the Hashlamah Project. “Times that I have met and discussed Hashlamah ideas with Arab Muslim friends in the West Bank (I do not want to overstate how often this happens), I am very secretive, as are they.”

This sort of face-to-face dialogue not only helps build empathy but also helps us face fears. J7.FJS noted that “instead of just accepting the fears, we should talk about them with other members or with people from other organizations and see what their advice is.” In Jerusalem, J8.MJI said that he was “discrete about who I talk to about my work with the Hashlamah Project, but I am well known for my anti-police brutality protests in various cities,” particularly in relation to their Ethiopian community. “There is no hiding that.”

In Yellow Springs, YS3.MM noted,

I realize things can happen that I won’t like. I know family members could hear about this and give me a very hard time about it, or fire me, or spread *gheebah* [gossip], “and bad-mouth me behind my back when I can’t defend what I am actually doing. All I can do is be low key and do my thing.

YS4.MJ said,

I try to be more careful with how I word things. I find myself phrasing things I want to convey as questions instead of statements when I am delivering a message. I am discrete about our temple hosting Hashlamah study circles with Muslims. I pitch it more as a general interfaith thing, knowing that this will be of little interest to most anyway. Then those who attend, I know that they are more open to discussing *how* we go about *hashlamah*.

YS4.MJ further explained that their precautions take the form of,

mostly just being judicious with how I say things, knowing that I have to cater to the most unspokenly-bigoted potential member of our temple. We may not hear a lot of the same racism that more conservative places do, but there are still plenty of scared people who let their prejudices cloud their vision.

Of the same chapter, YS5.MJ said,

like you [referring to the 2016 protest, described in Chapter I], we attended and were interviewed by scores of global media outlets. I refused to answer any questions about what religion we were. As we discussed on the way there, if we said “We are Jews making a militant statement in support of the rights of Muslims” then we would have been dismissed as *Mossadniks* or part of some evil “George Soros” bogeyman billionaire conspiracy. If we said we are Muslim, that wouldn’t be true or untrue either. In a literal sense, we’re Muslims of course. But in a sense of what normative Islam holds to as its doctrines and dogmas, we’re Jews because we keep the Torah and don’t think the Qur’an abrogated it—even while you have taken *Shahadah* before and I have no problem with it and have said it to myself in making *salat* at the mosque before.

He explained his own “Judeo-Sufism” which seems to require him to conceal beliefs from both Jewish and Muslim sides.

When my daughter was born, I whispered the *Sh'ma`* [Jewish prayer of Divine Oneness] in one ear and the *Shahadah* in the other. I like the whole Judeo-Sufi approach and I have really looked at myself in that like more every year. So I feel that Muslims are my brothers and sisters, just like Jews are. Like you said at our last study circle, ‘Islam’ and what Rabbi Bachya called ‘*Istislam*’ [Surrender to the Divine, a synonym in Judeo-Arabic for Judaism itself] are part of a continuum of *emumah*, or faith. But that isn’t fair to Muslims for us to represent ourselves as “just Muslim” with no explanation of how heterodox we are. And breaking down the Judeo-Sufi approach would have tripped out the interviewers and led to bizarre stories being written.

Keeping to “we are declining to answer questions about our religious beliefs or practices” seemed very effective, except when a Jewish interviewer commented, “I know you are Muslim, because no one else wears hats like that.” The response that the Jerusalem style *frik kippot* are that size and many people who are Jewish wear them there in fact, elicited the response: “Now I know you are Jewish!” she said, excitedly having partially cracked the case of our Judeo-Sufi religious ambiguity. But as YS5.MJ recalled, “thankfully the others in the crowd of reporters did not understand why, and just ignored her.”

These assumptions made were in his case due to his nonnormative Black Jewish identity. “Being Black and Jewish, it was easier for people to assume that I was just Muslim, but people were definitely stumped by you, asking if you were Turkish, where your parents are from, and

things like that.” Moreover, he explained that the immediate threats of violence or law enforcement at protests don’t bother him much.

Even at that protest we faced threats of arrest, the FBI put out a BOLO alert for us, and several people got very confrontational and we almost came to blows with them a few times. Those threats don’t bother me too much. I grew up rough. But I still have to feed my daughter and I can’t lose a good paying job because someone thinks I’m Muslim. But that’s exactly what happened . . . not just Muslim but saying that I would not allow round ups of Muslims on American soil should Trump become the president. In the Midwest that isn’t going to go over well.

At work, he was fired from a managerial position from, by “a White evangelical regional manager,” typical of the region and its demographics.

Related to this idea of *taqiyyah*, was the coding of *keeping personal religious practices and participation separate from activism*. In Yellow Springs, YS3.MM explained that “just being low key and trying to keep my family life and going to the *masjid* separate from my activism,” is what it boils down to for him. He stated,

I wish it could be different and I could tell everyone there, or put up Hashlamah fliers, and invite people over for this after *Jum`ah*, but that just isn’t reality. If I even proposed it, it would be me against the world. So I just keep it separate.

Another related sub-topic was coded *using a pseudonym*. In Jerusalem, J1.FMI said,

I try to be careful. For instance, people in our group don’t know that,” the name they go by, “is not my real name, or a name any family or friends would know. So if they say ‘I know this woman from our Chapter named [omitted], from Jerusalem’ people will say “I never heard of her.”

He added,

I try to keep people here unaware of anything that could identify me, so even if there was a Mossad infiltrator, they would know nothing about me. They would look me up on their computer and nothing would come up.

Gwenerally, this goes hand-in-hand with the coding of *being discrete about activism*. In Tel Aviv, TA1.MJI said,

All that I can do is try to be discrete and compartmentalize my activism from my daily life. With people who have known me for a while that is harder to do. With family it is

impossible. With my current job, so far so good—they don't know about my activism or beliefs and I am able to stay on good terms my boss.

Still, they felt that if this information was made known to them, or if they were doxxed and the place of employment targeted by opponents of his activism: “I do believe that if he found out about my activism, I would be terminated, as I have been in the past.”

What I coded as *intersectionality* plays a key role in *Renewing Focus*. In Yellow Springs, YS3.MM explained,

When I face discrimination here, or when I go back home [to Palestine]. I look at what brothers in Ferguson, or Baltimore are going through. They got their own IDF there policing them every day and treating them like criminals no matter what they do. The oppression that I feel? That makes me listen to the oppression that other people feel too. Again, this just emphasizes to me how we are all really the same—only separated by language, nation, religion, or whatever.

Similarly, in Jerusalem, J5.FJI explained that the fight for Palestinian equal rights and justice is inseparable from her fight for feminism.

This isn't new to me. Facing the possibility of arrest or violent men at a protest is something I have been doing for decades already in this city. It makes no difference to me as a feminist if someone is targeting me for threats, violence or arrest because I am fighting for feminism or because I am fighting for Justice for Palestine. Both of these causes are intersectional and concern human rights.

Sometimes, particularly since the inauguration of the Trump administration, Shared enemies have been a focal point and driving force in *intersectionality* renewing focus. In Yellow Springs, YS4.MJ explained,

The fears of terrorism I have here are from the Alt-Right, from White nationalists emboldened by the hateful rhetoric of the president. Overnight, after election day we saw attacks on synagogues skyrocket. Hundreds of temples and day schools were targeted. I am not afraid of Arabs or Muslims. I am afraid of these White Anglo Saxon Protestant Evangelical populists.

Still, he explained, “this brings up an interesting point”—that the enemies of the Jewish people also happen to be the enemies of Islam.

These same people hate Muslims as much as they hate us. The fact that I am pro-Muslim, pro-Palestinian and that we hold study circles in our temple that invite Muslims in—all of those things might make me and our congregation more of a target for these sorts of people. Thankfully, they don't seem to be aware of our participating in the Hashlamah Project.

Navigation and coping with threats: Renewed focus. The second principal theme of Navigation and Coping with Threats, was coded as *Renewing Focus* and can often be driven by a life-long spiritual focus. In Tel Aviv, we find that *religious-centered motivation for social justice*, is not at all uncommon. In spite of all that she has faced, TA5.FJI explained,

I confront these fears by realizing that if I run back to America, the Zionist government has won. They have defeated me and humiliated me. I won't allow that to happen. I am here to defeat them. Not through suicide bombing, but through the *jihād of the heart*. By fighting for Palestinian rights, as a Jew and a Jew who loves Islam, the prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an, I am a proverbial thorn in the Zionist government's side. So that means I have to be right there with them if I am going to cause them discomfort by challenging their system of brutality and oppression.

In Jerusalem, J3.MJI said,

Fear is not real, it is imagined. All of it is imagined. Even if you die, that is imagined. All of this is a dream and Ha'Shem is the Dreamer. What matters is doing what Ha'Shem wants, because we are thoughts within His mind. And Ha'Shem tells us in the Torah that He wants us to do 'Justice' if we live in this Holy Land. That is my only concern: to do justice and let the proverbial chips fall where they may.

They added that their focus and drive “will sustain for as long as I live—because it is the right thing to do.”

TA4.MDI, a Druze participant, stated,

As Duruz, we believe in *tanasokh* [reincarnation]. [Thus,] if you think you have one life to live, it is very easy to be afraid of every possible thing that could end your life. For us, we know that we will be back here again and again. If we die, we will live again.

Confronting fears head on also seemed to be the advice of many interviewed. In Jerusalem, J2.MMP explained the difference, in accordance with the book *The Gift of Fear: And Other Survival Signals That Protect Us from Violence* De Becker, which his Hashlamah Project

chapter recommended for participants to read after my 2014 pilot study in Israel. J2.MMP

distinguished these as follows:

A fear is, [that] maybe that new guy came and is really a Zionist and going to shoot us all, then walk away. Bam! End of our entire little project here, right? That's all it would take. But that is also something that can be a credible threat.

Yet he emphasized that we can step outside of our fears and look at them analytically, understanding their evolutionary purpose, but nevertheless, not being blindly ruled by them.

I think the key word here is "credible." It isn't really, fully credible until I know more information about this guy. He might be okay, or he might be a Zionist here to kill me. So, until I know more, it is just a fear, not yet a credible threat to my safety and life.

In the Jerusalem interviews, there was also a tendency to confront fear, make note of it, keep your guard up, and continue pressing on. J2.MMP explained: "The fears will always be there, but they are there anyway. You have to live and do what you set out to do even if there is a risk." J5.FJI similarly noted that, "we really only have two choices: resist or succumb. I, for one, refuse to succumb to any societal forces or pressures that seek to maintain the status quo of misogyny or racism." As a result, they believe they have

become somewhat numb to the threats. They've become more than just threats; they've been arrest and violence actually perpetrated against me and my friends. What can I do besides continue on? It's either that or resign myself to a life of reluctant servitude.

J6.FJI noted that most of their friends accept what they are doing.

But they see me as having some sort of martyrdom complex. They think I will die because of this. I tell them they are overreacting and that nothing is that dramatic that we are doing. We are just sitting together and talking. If someone is going to kill us for that then they will kill us for anything we do. I cannot let this hold me back.

TA3.FJI stated the belief that "the biggest threats to our safety are the unknown things." Again, drawing on De Becker's (1998) *The Gift of Fear*, she noted that "if I walk down a dark alleyway, I might feel anxiety or 'fear' but this is not supposed to paralyze me, it is supposed to make me alert. I can mitigate the danger by being alert." Thus, the point is not to ignore the

fears, but to look at them outside of oneself, analytically, and critically. “I neither ignore the fear and charge head in without being alert, nor do I accept the fear and refuse to walk down the alleyway,” she explained further.

I accept that we have evolved in such a way that fear is supposed to help protect us, to raise our awareness. Evolution did not make fear emerge to cripple us. This would make us *more* susceptible to predators. Instead, it was supposed to provide us with more safety and security.

She thought her activism can be sustained with this focus.

I think it is very sustainable if I neither allow fears to paralyze me, nor disregard them. The fear itself can be there to keep me safe. It does not always mean that the fear is right, but it is your brain telling you there is something to watch out for.

Thus, she described the critical process of analyzing fears, saying that “all I can do is ask ‘why do I feel fear?’ Maybe the reason is good. Maybe it is ridiculous. I don’t ignore the fear, I question it and rationally engage it.” The results of this bear repeating in full:

Since I have been here for a number of years, I have learned firsthand about how loving and accepting most Palestinians can be. This began after you [the author] came out here for those seminars. You challenged us to just go out and meet Muslims, to strike conversations with them. So I did.

I was actually in Jerusalem the first time that I did. I was buying produce and noticed a young Arab man staring at me. My first thought was that he was looking for a target to attack. I felt horrible for thinking this. I felt racist. But this is what I had been programmed to think was the threat I would face. My fear led to guilt, which led to me facing the fear and forcing myself to go introduce myself. As it turned out, he apologized for staring but had heard my American accent and that caught his attention. There was nothing more to it than that. But we got talking and I invited him to our Chapter study circle. He has been going ever since.

Since then, I have challenged myself to face any fears or discomfort by challenging the programming I received and forcing myself to engage in dialog with the people I have an initial reaction to fear. Usually this tends to be younger people. I have done the same with older Arabs, but I don’t notice the same programming kicking in. I was specifically indoctrinated with a fear of young Arabs, who I was essentially told would kill me at any moment if they had the chance.

In the interview, TA2.MJI stated that the threats and fears are all real, not just because one is subjectively feeling them and perceiving things in this way, but because statistically-speaking,

one is more susceptible to retaliation. “In this type of activism work, we aren’t just afraid of something that might happen, we are afraid of something more likely to happen to us than to the average person.” He thus explained,

We have to keep a balance. We have to not push too far at once, or with only one or two people being the faces of movements. We need an array of people to distribute the attention and the heat that we take.

TA2.MJI added that “before, I used to always be worried that I would be attacked. I still worry now but it is a proactive kind of worrying.” They explained that “it is more like Spider Man’s ‘spidey sense.’” TA2.MJI said that one is alerted to potential danger,

and begins to mentally plan accordingly. Sometimes I have felt this in verbal confrontations at protests, when a person who doesn’t like whatever I am saying at the time tries to be intimidating or get into my personal space. I feel a fight or flight adrenaline response, but it doesn’t cause me to do either, it just allows me to be aware of the danger and stay alert.

Persevering by facing fears was also a theme in the interview with Yellow Springs resident YS2.MJ who said,

Being raised by my grandparents [who were Nazi Holocaust survivors] shaped the way I look at things like this. Fighting for justice is Jewish. It is what we have always done. So, I can’t be inconsistent and refuse to fight when the people carrying out injustices happen to also be Jewish. I have to keep fighting, regardless of the threats. Because when people stop fighting because of fear, that’s when we start getting rounded up on the trains.

In Jerusalem, J6.FJI explained,

People make threats because they want to dissuade you from continuing something that they do not like. If you take these threats seriously, but do not allow them to weigh you down so you cannot move forward, then you will probably be okay.

TA2.MJI, said,

We have to keep a balance. We have to not push too far at once, or with only one or two people being the faces of movements. We need an array of people to distribute the attention and the heat that we take [and to] be aware of the danger and stay alert.

In Jerusalem, J6.FJI explained that “if you take these threats seriously, but do not allow them to weigh you down so you cannot move forward, then you will probably be okay.” YS3.MM

noted that the question actually caused them to reflect and realize that their method of coping with the threats was ultimately a somewhat unhealthy or self-destructive one, in that it amounted to simply not thinking about the threats and getting on with one's work. He stated,

This is a question that highlights how I try not to think about this question. I try not to think about the risks, to be honest. I just do my thing and if a problem arises, I will deal with it when that time comes.

With respect to what has not worked, however, all dysfunctional "solutions" seemed to reduce to the theme of "not thinking about the threats" and "getting on with one's work." We might more accurately term this "not confronting fear," in contrast to the following discussion of facing and confronting fears. For example, YS3.MM noted that the question actually caused them to reflect and realize that their method of coping with the threats was ultimately a somewhat unhealthy or self-destructive one, in that it amounted to simply not thinking about the threats and getting on with one's work. YS5.MJ also explained that sometimes he adopts a not-thinking-about-it approach. "I guess you could say that I have confronted fears by not thinking about them, which is not really a healthy approach." Time and time again, those describing this as their "solution" were frustrated in their efforts to navigate threats.

The interview with Rabbi YS4.MJ revealed that his feeling that he is doing the best he can to confront the fears he has; but, he said, "I have no intentions of stopping what I am doing," even if real threats persist. He continued:

If I do end up being fired again, I will take it as a blessing. The audience I have today is more open to these ideas than the last one, so perhaps God was trying to move me from a congregation of closed hearts to one with more open ones. Only time will tell.

In Yellow Springs, the threats often came electronically, on social media, website forums, or in emails. YS1.MJ said,

Like almost everyone I know involved, I have experienced various threats—usually online. I differentiate between those and something more serious threats based on the idea

that a real threat is intent plus ability. If there is no apparent ability to carry out a threat, then it isn't a threat, it is a fear.

The solution and approach that a number of participants took was to *back off when there was too much attention, then come back with renewed focus* once the proverbial “heat” is off. In short, the strategy is to “withdraw, regroup, return.” Thus, TA2.MJI explained,

When you notice people making threats, or retaliating in some way, you might want to take a break. Work in a more supportive role. Recede into the shadows for a while until you are off their radar. Then you can go back, doing the intensity of work you truly wish to be doing.

In Yellow Springs, YS5.MJ recalled his horrific assault, describing it as follows:

After being smashed up like that, I had no choice. I couldn't go to protests for a long time and didn't again until after Trump got into office and we rallied against the Muslim Ban and shut down the Columbus airport. I guess I'm hard-headed, because my skull is about the only bone in my body that wasn't broken by that hammer . . . that and I don't seem to learn when I'm punished like that.

After the attack, he said that he

felt like giving up forever, but the climate of hate in America just got so bad after Trump won that I really looked at it like this could be the “Fourth Reich” or something and we had to take a stand to nip it all in the bud. Thankfully I was far from the only one who felt that way, and countless thousands have taken a stand to speak out and ensure Trump's whole term and administration implodes.

An overarching conclusion was that this sort of activism has sustainability. This means that as long as the activism is not too public and one gets involved slowly, maintaining a balance between life as an activist and personal life can be achieved. It is sustainable as long as one is keeping healthy—addressing fears and having strong networks and support while achieving high levels of communication.

In Tel Aviv, TA3.FJI explained,

Every encounter and engagement with our fears—based on reality or imagined concern born from programming—allows us to have more peace of mind. The analytical process of deduction becomes more automatic with every encounter, and we begin to more naturally sift through the real and perceived threats.

This *Renewed Focus* was felt by J1.FMI, in Jerusalem, who said that she

will keep going with this as long as I can. I know it is important work, but I also know that one day someone else will have to take my place. Maybe once I have children, I will not want to risk their safety the way I risk mine. Losing my home then would be much worse than losing it now. I'm not sure I will continue facing these risks at that point.

In Yellow Springs, YS2.MJ noted that *Renewed Focus* can come seeing the effectiveness, of one's activism.

I've seen hearts and minds changed in single afternoons in our group. I know change can happen. I know peace can be realized because I have seen it happen in the microcosm, right in front of me. Knowing that peace is possible gives me peace of mind.

Under *interpersonal, cCommunity or group solutions*, there were four subthemes which will be discussed sequentially below; all are forms of, or relate to, the need for *empathy*.

For some, what was necessary was seeing *support from the perceived other side*. In Tel Aviv, TA3.FJI explained,

If Jewish doors opened for Palestinians to come and have Shabbat diner, or if Palestinian homes opened to Jews who support their human rights, then I think we could see a new breakthrough—not only in terms of support but in terms of how we feel supported by one another in facing our fears.

Empathy could sometimes be fostered by sharing from and with other groups. In Jerusalem, J5.FJI explained that she believed that

our study circle would do well to sit down with the Women of the Wall or any other number of Jewish or Muslim activist groups and discuss and listen to how they have been facing threats and persevering for years. We can all learn a lot from each other.

This, in turn, builds empathy. J5.FJI continued, "Knowing how hard facing these threats can be for me, it allows me to realize that the Palestinians are feeling the same things, but more often and many times more intensely."

J3.MJI gave a colorful example of their interaction with a Muslim man at the *shuq* marketplace.

Let me give you an example from just yesterday. I saw a friend in the Muslim Quarter today on Via Dorosa.

“Kifek?” He asked me. “How are you?” “Everything is *khara* [shit],” I said. “How are you?” “Everything is *khara* too” he replied.

We bumped fists with tears in our eyes and went our separate ways. This is the sort of common, every day mutual support and understanding we give each other that allows us to know we stand together and are not alone—because often times it feels like we are a lone voice crying out in the wilderness, as prophet Yeshayahu [Isaiah] said.”

J4.MJI said that he did not think he had empathy with the Palestinian people until he came to learn what it feels like to be seen as Arab-looking in the United States. As a Mizrahi Jew, their Jewish identity was often questioned by American Jews.

Eventually I found a *S’fardi* community, but it was an hour drive away. It was worth it. It reminded me more of what my grandparents’ Judaism was like, when I was young and sat in the sukkah with sand beneath us in the Negev. [Still], the climate against Arabs was the same there. Yes, most people looked more like me. But the division between *Mizrachim* and Arabs was more pronounced than I saw with *Ashkenazim*,” they explained. “Some have told me this is because we were kicked out of Muslim nations and Israel and the United States became our refuge. At that point we stopped seeing ourselves as Arab Jews and instead as Israeli Jews.

It was not just Jews, though; J4.MJI continued,

This leads me to my point, and my answer to your question. In California, when I go to the gym Persian and Arab Muslims assumed, I was Muslim too. They would come up to me at 24 Hour Fitness and ask me “where are you from?” Their mouths would almost drop open when I answered “Israel.” “Oh, you are Palestinian?” They must have known I wasn’t because most Palestinians in Israel—even Israeli citizens—would say what city they live in and would say that they are Palestinians: “I am from Jerusalem, I am Palestinian” is the sort of thing I have always heard. But my direct contact with Muslims in Israel was much more limited than my interactions in the pluralistic environment of California.

Sadly, he came to “realize all of the United States is not as forward-thinking as what I experienced.” The result of these interactions was empathy with Muslims in general—particularly their experiences in the West—and in the Levant with Palestinians, specifically.

As I became friends, real friends with Arabs from interacting with them in America—Muslim Arabs—I was unable to let things that I heard from fellow Jews slide. If someone said something racist against them, I spoke up. This made me a target even in my own place of worship in the United States. When I came back to Israel I felt like a different

person. I noticed racism more. I noticed oppression more. I interacted with Muslims naturally; struck up conversations, hung out with them and so on. Do you know what that is like? If I go somewhere with Muslims? Let's say one of them has a *kufi* on for instance, or their wife is with them and she is *hijabi*; the perception is that I am an Arab Muslim too. All of this has made me a target. Just interacting with Palestinians as equals makes me a target. Promoting these ideas? That makes me even more of a target. It is one thing to live this way, but to tell others they should live this way too sends many here into blind rage.

In the interview in Yellow Springs, YS1.MJ explained,

We all have a deep, human desire to be treated as something of value. That it is our highest common denominator and what should unite us—respecting one another and allowing people to have dignity: whether children of the *Nakbah*, or children of the *Shoah* and expulsions from Muslim nations.

In Tel Aviv, TA2.MJI said,

I can only imagine what it is like to go through endless checkpoints to travel, work, pray, play on the beach, or any of the things that Palestinians are subjected to. I think whatever risks I face, they are pale in comparison to what they face all the time.

TA3.FJI similarly stated that she realized that

the fear I had in the market when the Palestinian man was staring at me is nothing compared to the fear that many Palestinians experience every day in going through checkpoints or wondering if someone will have figured out a legal loophole to steal their homes. In the West Bank, people who are near settlements have to worry about “will the settlers shoot at us today? Will they drive a car through a group of children because they feel threatened?”

Her own feelings helped her empathize with common Palestinian fears as well. “My own fears help me realize the weight of very real threats that Palestinians face, and the fear of those threats that they must engage with and confront just to function in society.”

Considering the perspective of the other side led to feelings of relational empathy; Jerusalem participant, J4.MJI, explained, “the glue that holds all of our relationships together is the mutual recognition of the desire to be seen, heard, listened to, and treated fairly; to be recognized, understood, and to feel safe in the world.” He noted that the accepting of the perceived other, is key to connecting. “When our identity is accepted and we feel included, we

are granted a sense of freedom and independence and a life filled with hope and possibility which might have otherwise seemed hopeless,” he explained. In regard to the Hashlamah Project, he noted,

When we are given an apology when someone does us harm, we recognize that even when we fall short of being our best selves, there is always a way to reconnect. “I’m sorry” are two of the most powerful words anyone can utter. Just saying those words to my Palestinian brothers and sisters has brought people to tears. I am not saying I am sorry because I did something to you.

Another point he emphasized was that “even when forced to be in the IDF I did not mistreat anyone, nor did I ever engage in combat.” Yet he still apologizes for participating in the Occupation, rather than justifying it because he did not directly harm anyone. “I am still sorry to have participated in the Occupation anyway, and [for] policing a people I have no right to police. I am sorry many of them were not allowed back into the land within our borders.” Being sorry can even mean just showing empathy that you too are saddened by the divisions and oppression currently manifesting in a society. J4.MJI added,

I am sorry there are checkpoints, settlements and bombings. Too many people think that if you did not hurt someone who is hurt then you have no reason to tell them you are sorry that they were hurt and to try to prevent it from happening again. Dignity has the potential to change the world, but only if we look at each other the way we look at ourselves.

For Ethiopian Jews like J8.MJI, in recent years there has been growing empathy with the Palestinian people, due to the continued abuses by the government against this nonnormative Jewish ethnicity. “While civil unrest has continued in Ethiopia, thousands of protesters have been killed by the government, Israel still leaves 10,000 Jews there to suffer or die,” he explained. Yet, he stated, Netanyahu “lied and said our families could all come and join us here. Then once he got leverage back in the Knesset against Avraham Neguise, “suddenly our Jewish lineage and practices of Ethiopian Jews are questioned.”

That might be excusable, he explained, if it weren’t for the open-door policy to so many Russians who turned out to not even have been Jewish before immigration and their

subsequent conversion. “I want to know why Jews from the former Soviet Union with completely undocumented and uncertain backgrounds were welcomed. The Rabbinate later realized that hundreds of thousands of them lied and never came from a Jewish family at all. So did they send them back? No! They had a group, mass conversion so now they are not only looked at as Jews by the Rabbinate, but as Orthodox Jews and thus *real* Jews, unlike Beta Israel, and unlike even Reform, Reconstruction or *Masorti* Jews.

“Can we call this anything other than racism?” he asks. “I cannot.”

In Tel Aviv, TA5.FJI said she felt

very supported by my Palestinian friends. The degradation and humiliation I experienced at Israeli hands was almost like a rite of initiation for me in their eyes. “Now you know exactly how Palestinians feel—because to them, you are Palestinian now,” was one comment I heard after I was released.

This hit home hard. She realized that she had “lived what Palestinians lived,” she said.

“I’ve lived with them, as them. I’ve been treated as them by the Zionist government. [Yet] before I came to this point from thesis to antithesis to synthesis, I was a staunch Muslim [“revert”].”

She explained further,

I wasn’t Salafi, but I wasn’t how many American Muslims are either. I was very much a defender of the Palestinian right to resist. I don’t think I asked enough critical questions at the time, like why do the people telling us to sacrifice ourselves never sacrifice themselves or their own children for *jihad*?

Still, the relationship with Palestinians through *face-to-face discussion*, and her interaction with them whether in the homes of friends, or in the *masjid*, led her to completely support militant resistance against the Israeli State.

I definitely defended *jihad* and I saw the resistance to the Zionist government as a legitimate form of *jihad*. I tried to focus more on the soldier and police who I saw as legitimate military targets, and less on civilians being killed while dining out with their friends or family.

In Jerusalem, J7.FJS insisted that “these fears are all substantiated . . . Anyone who thinks I am overstating the risk has never lived in the West Bank.” They explained that “this is a conflict painted in black and white,” wrongly. “Both sides,” they explained “believe they are in

the right entirely. The truth is both sides are right about some things and wrong about others. But neither side wants to see that.”

In Yellow Springs, some of the discussion of empathy and understanding the other side similarly came from Jewish participants who said they were misunderstood by many Muslims and that they believed there was a relational understanding by the “other side” that would foster empathy for Jews not engaged in oppressing Palestinians. In turn, they suggested, this would increase Jewish empathy for the Palestinian people. YS1.MJ said, “While I was able to confront fears and real-world consequences of my activism, I don’t see how I can do that much longer without the reciprocation of respect”—respect that he did not believe he was receiving from Muslims.

I could live out the rest of my life fighting for the Palestinian people, for social justice and peace or “reconciliation.” But I cannot do this if I am slapped in the face by the very same people I am fighting for. Not all, mind you. But a lot more than should be given a free pass. I would estimate that about half of my interactions with Palestinian activists have been very negative, while the other half have been good. Some people will call me a Nazi if I say that while I’m not a Zionist, I can’t lump my grandma who lived in a Marxist *kibbutz* in with Likud. Zionism means different things to different Jews. I don’t believe in borders to keep Palestinians out, so I would say I cannot be a Zionist. But I also don’t believe in borders to keep Jews out either. I try to be understanding of Palestinian suffering, but when that suffering causes someone to lash out at my very existence, that is a problem for me that I am finding increasingly difficult to sweep under the rug for the sake of reconciliation.

One thing he said that few could disagree with was that “we have to realize that we can both be right in different ways. It should not be an all or nothing proposition. Living together in Israel and Palestine should not be a zero-sum game.” Another Yellow Springs participant, YS4.MJ, said that both sides need to understand each other’s perspectives if empathy is to increase.

Frankly speaking, the Palestinian people are in pain just like us—even if we can’t understand it—and when you’re in pain it is hard to see the humanity in the other side at all. Dehumanization leads to more violence and more incitement. It leads to a beautiful family being literally slaughtered in their home while having Shabbat dinner [referencing

an attack which had occurred not long before the interview]. I figure that maybe in asking my friends about their loss, I might be a little less angry at attacks like these.

Apart from building connections with individuals and thereby creating empathy, another theme was that of *Empathy with Other Groups Through Sharing*. Specifically, this meant networking with other groups and forming support systems. In Yellow Springs, YS3.MM suggested that “maybe more networking with other people and organizations doing this sort of thing.” Similarly, YS2.MJ emphasized,

Networking is the key. We are already doing pretty good, but everything we have in terms of support has been the result of networking and staying closely connected. One could reason that more networking and closer connections will result in more support.

In Tel Aviv, TA3.FJI said,

I have seen so many hearts changed through dialog alone. It isn't about arguing your side of things better, or them arguing theirs. It is about shutting up and listening to others—particularly those who have had less of a voice in society.

J7.FJS said that the bulk of their interactions are with other groups, and with each interaction they try not only to get those organizations to understand their atypical perspective in the settlement, but also, spread empathy among Jews, on behalf of the Palestinian people. “I can only hope that I honor the Palestinians by telling their stories with empathy and sincerity to Jews in Gush Etzion or in Israel.”

In Jerusalem, J2.MMP noted,

Our study circle has given me the opportunity to hear many perspectives I otherwise would not have. I have heard stories from Jews whose parents were kicked out of Iraq or Yemen. I have met Jews who have grandparents who fled Hebron even though they had been living there just like we had been living throughout the land ourselves. [Just from] hearing these stories helps me better understand the Israeli mind, and why they act the way they act. It isn't just the European Jews who came fleeing the Nazis. It is also Jews who came here fleeing us. That isn't Islam. That isn't what the prophet Muhammad taught at all, *sal Allahu `alayhi wa-ala alihi wa-salaam*, [a traditional statement of respect said after mentioning Muhammad's name]. But for us, we think about our own reality by default. We didn't really have anything to do with those expulsions, and yes, while we would have ideally welcomed Jewish refugees if we had a Palestinian State and there was no war

when this all happened, the truth is their need for safety and residence should not mean our loss of land and dignity.

In Tel Aviv, TA5.FJI said,

I would like to see more Israeli Jews doing what I am doing—what I have been doing. I don't mean taking *shahadah*. I don't mean anything specifically religious. I mean going to the West Bank with me and staying with some of my Palestinian friends, making new Palestinian friends and having dinner with them, then returning to stay with the new friends. It is important that we demonstrate to Palestinians that not all Jews are Zionists”

TA4.MDI explained that he felt “very safe in Israel,” in spite of being a nonnormative ethnicity. “I have family in Lebanon, and I do not feel as safe there. We are not attacked there, or anything like that, but there is an idea that we will be fine as long as we keep our heads down.”

This experience led to an understanding of the Jewish historical experience.

I understand that it was like that for Jews in countries that are a majority Muslim in the past and under the Caliphates. [As a result], a lot of the angry *Duruz* you see who are quicker than Jews to pull a trigger in the military, are reacting the same way so many Mizrahi Jews are in a same way reacting.

For them, there is a sense of payback. They feel that this is their opportunity to not be pushed around anymore and so,

Both *Duruz* and Jews take that opportunity and take generations of culturally embedded frustration out on people who really had nothing to do with their suffering. It is guilt by association, and it has to stop. Even the famous American Palestinian activist Rachel Corrie was run over by a *Derzi* in the IDF. A lot of people do not know this and blame the Jews, but many times I hear some horror story from the Occupation, the soldier who pulls the trigger is *Derzi*.

In Jerusalem, J5.FJI said,

I am big on listening. Listening, listening, listening. Everyone who is saying something when they are not asked things, they have something to say, something to tell everyone, that they need to hear. In our dialogues with oppressed groups or individuals, our first duty is to shut up and listen. I expect the same from Jewish men with regards to dialoging with the Women of the Wall. We already know your perspective. We don't need to have it restated. Shut up and listen to our point of view.

This *mutual recognition of dignity* was a theme in the interview with Tel Aviv resident, TA1.MJI. He said that he does not “presume to compare my situation to that of the Palestinian

people. But to the extent that my activism puts me in danger, I realize more and more how they feel—unavoidably—day to day.” Still, he explained, there is no equivalency.

The difference is that as an Israeli Jew, I *chose* whether or not to engage in this struggle. For the Palestinian people, the struggle has come to them and they cannot avoid it. I think in this way it is harder for Jewish activists in this fight to persevere, because our position allows us to choose when and where (and if) we wage the struggle. The danger which comes to us is the danger we place ourselves in. Others are not so lucky. Palestinians don’t decide to become activists; the battle comes to them. Either they resist or they die, or they live in subjugation without dignity.

He explained further that he realizes from his “own experience of these threats that resistance from my Palestinian neighbors is itself a matter of dignity.” Nevertheless, he doesn’t always agree with every approach or action taken by Palestinians.

Sometimes I think perhaps half of them have very wrong ideas about what should happen. But at the same time, they are not sitting down discussing this in a college debate setting. They had this struggle forced on them . . . resisting occupation and the denial of the Right of Return is the only way they can hold their heads up and still respect themselves and each other.

This *mutual recognition of dignity* naturally leads to considering and *understanding the perspective of the (perceived) “Other” side*. In Yellow Springs, YS2.MJ spoke of this by saying that civilian-targeting by both sides is “all a tragedy. There are Palestinians who slaughter innocent Jewish families. They might rationalize it as a response to the occupation, but not all those killed are attacking Palestinians—the kids killed certainly are not.” At the same time, he said, “on the other side, recently after attacks like this, Israelis killed three Palestinians. All of us are victims in the madness.” He claimed that only a minority of people are actively perpetuating the conflict.

The vast majority of people just want to live in peace, with dignity. I am on nobody’s side in this sick madness. But I am with people who want to unlearn the hate! That means honoring the dignity of people, even if they have been conditioned to hate me. Not all Palestinians are good, but most of them are—just like most, but not all Jews are. By honoring the individual and not collectivizing them as guilty of terrorism because they are the same nationality as a terrorist, I am able to listen to them and hear their plight, as well what they propose will solve this tragic situation.

Another member of the Yellow Springs Chapter, YS1.MJ, said that in order to persevere, he believes he needs to see acceptance from Muslims.

I may sound upset, or even angry, but ultimately, I am hurt and feel betrayed. It has been one thing after another. Every time I say anything that isn't "let's kick all the Jews out and make them go back to where they came from" then I am told I am a right wing "Zionazi." I need a little more mutual respect than that if I am going to continue engaging with Muslims.

"Hypothetically," he explained, "If I had experienced that type of support, I would feel as confident as I used to in facing these threats." He added,

I am willing to sacrifice my safety, even my freedom or, if necessary, my life. But not for anyone who refuses to recognize my own dignity. I need to know that this is respected the same way I respect the dignity of others.

YS3.MM said,

We have got to be there for each other. When I hear a Jew tell me these same experiences, these same worries and family issues with what we're doing, it reminds me that we're all really the same in the ways that matter. We're all human beings. Our experiences are really no different, just different languages, religions and cultures. [For instance], when we see other people have experienced this or that and they keep at it, that inspires us; so discussing with those people and being the contact with them in the first place is essential to realize that. Knowing the discrimination I face here, I relate to other peoples who are oppressed and see our struggle as one.

Intersectionally, he realizes that "Palestine isn't separate from South Africa, or from Ferguson. It's all the same fight. And all of that isn't separate from what the Nazis did." He said that he has empathy for Jews, because of historical persecution. "I can empathize with the fear a lot of Jews seem to have. The Holocaust was no joke. We are going through our own thing, and it has us afraid of Jews." He contended that formerly, Muslims

never used to be afraid of Jews. Now we think of Jews and we think of scary tough people. This isn't the American image for sure. And it isn't what I see from the pages of history. But things we did too were wrong.

He said that Muslims have had some "bad players acting in our name" who, he argued, "didn't really represent the people." Jews, he explained further, "have the same thing with the

Israeli government acting in their name and not representing what I am hearing from a lot of Jews—that this isn't what they are all about.”

Shared experiences go a long way in fostering this same sort of empathy. In Jerusalem, J6.FJI described, “in our study circle we share experiences, almost like a support group. When I hear what others have experienced, I realize that the threats I face are much less and if they can persevere, so can I.” Still, she said that she understands that

things are not as hard for me as they are for Palestinians. By listening to the experiences of Palestinians I honor their dignity. Having someone listen to your experiences and perspective is in many ways restoring your dignity because it means your experiences are valid to the listener.

These shared experiences lead to understanding perspective of others, which in turn lead to empathy. In Yellow Springs, YS4.MJ said,

I don't like being fired from a job, but when that happened, I realized that those in oppressed contexts face threats and violations of dignity that are often much more severe. They don't have as easy of a solution as I do—just applying to more progressive congregations.

He further said,

It is so hard to have empathy for “the other when there are terrorist incidences on either side, but asking “the other” about their perspective, their loss, is the first step—and I'm glad I took it because it has led to conversations that have given me perspective I didn't have, and have given ‘other’ empathy for us, too.

Among the primary ways that participants said they experienced empathy was through *support systems* and *face-to-face discussions*. In Jerusalem, J4.MJI explained that “support from other people engaged in the same activism is essential. If we do not talk about the fears we have, how will we engage them and overcome them?” As well, J1.FMI noted,

Sometimes we navigate through difficulties and *fitnah* [the Qur'anic term for disputes, arguments or even “drama” colloquially] . . . by talking through things. The Qur'an says “in difficulty there is ease.” That's because when you go to exercise your body, first it is hard, then it is something you are used to. First you get sore, then you get stronger. So we face these difficulties and we fight through them. In the end, our minds and our spirits are stronger.

Furthermore, she explained, she “would like to see more support from Jews,” both to increase empathy with the Jewish people for her personally—something she said she acknowledged struggling with at various intervals—and to show her fellow Palestinians another side of the Jewish people, besides the settlers and soldiers they are used to interacting with.

I understand that there are many great Jews involved with us [in the Hashlamah Project, and other liberation groups and leftist Israeli organizations] but those are people who have organized the group, or people who have been with us now for years. The new Jews who I see show up and come for maybe two weeks? These types always seem to think they deserve an award for even talking to me. It is disgusting.

She said that she needs to see people from the dominant social group standing up for what is right, simply because it is right, not to earn points or be seen as having “ally” status. “I need to see the other Jews who I know and love standing up to them and calling them out on this.” She asserted,

We shouldn’t have to tell the Jews who are on our side to speak up when there is something offensive being done, or an offensive attitude. They need to recognize it themselves, first, before we have to say anything, so we don’t even have to.

She acknowledged that this is already happening and that she has witnessed it.

I do see this sometimes. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t still be here, I would have given up and said “there are no Jews who are our friends.” But I have met many who believe more strongly in our struggle than some of my own family. Maybe they will betray us one day, *Allahu ‘alim*. But the ones who have been with us for a long time, or from the beginning, [back in 2012] “those ones I don’t think would ever stop fighting with us.

She concluded, “What we do is honor the dignity of others [through face-to-face dialogue]. We sit together, meet, eat, drink, pray, share experiences, debate. We do all of this respectfully.” This act alone, she explained,

means everything and is the way for us to move forward together. That is honoring each of our dignity. If my dignity as a Palestinian was not being honored here, I would never have returned, to work with the Hashlamah Project.

In Yellow Springs, there was an emphasis on *psychological support within the Hashlamah Project* specifically, or within similar groups, more generally. YS4.MJ explained,

I treat it like any other issue I would counsel someone on. We talk through it in that context. Sometimes just voicing the fears and having someone say they understand is all that is necessary for them to feel renewed.

Other times, YS4.MJ said: “People just need to know that there is someone there supporting them and listening to them and what they are facing.” Since this is cornerstone to the operation of the Hashlamah Project, there has been some success at retaining activists over the years. YS4.MJ observed: “I have seen people on the verge of dropping out and disappearing from activism altogether, and after an hour-long talk, they are more motivated than I have ever seen them.” In Jerusalem, J6.FJI, added that “it is important to hear that you are not alone when you are experiencing something challenging. If you are told by other activists that they have experienced the same things, that gives a great peace of mind.”

Two themes that blended readily into the coding were employing the “buddy system” at protests, and through that, with insulating the Palestinian and Muslim participants in Israel, through something that a number of Israelis termed “Jewish privilege.” In Yellow Springs, it has become a common occurrence to go to protests and activist events as a group. YS1.MJ recounted: In the past I have tried to build with other like-minded activists. At protests we have made sure to ‘buddy up’ in groups so that no one could be ambushed—even verbally—by ‘Israel: right or wrong’ types.” In Jerusalem, J5.FJI, said “I don’t travel alone. *Ever*. I learned this lesson the hard way.” Another Jerusalem participant, J2.MMP, explained,

At protests that our local members have attended together, we have done it like this: we stay together in a group, not dividing off with our respective people. We thus aren’t easily able to be targeted by the police or extremists as Jewish or Muslim. So far this has worked out, as none of us have been arrested, even during the large march through Jerusalem that we attended a couple of years ago.

He added that “most of us assumed we would be arrested, based on threats the police had made prior to the march.”

In Tel Aviv, a Jewish participant, TA2.MJI explained that it is not just about the buddy

system there; it is specifically about more privileged chapter members insulating more socially vulnerable members. He asserted that “for every one thing that happens to us, 10 things happen to them.” Thus, he acknowledged both having “Jewish Privilege” in Israel, and that instead of apologizing for it, he believes it should be used against the very system that strips those rights and privileges from the Palestinian people. He explained further.

Because I am in the dominant group here, that carries with it privilege. By willingly stepping back, and giving the space to Palestinians to speak without immediately invalidating whatever they share of their experiences with justifications, or claims that “Arab countries do the same thing,” I am changing the social momentum that is pressing against them—even if just in that moment and in our study circle.

In Jerusalem, this idea was expanded by a Jewish participant, J3.MJI, who said,

I would love to see more religious Jews getting involved in social justice issues. These are Jewish issues. All too often it is the more secular Jews who think they are doing something irrelevant or aside from Judaism by fighting for the downtrodden. But that is far from the case. This is the work of *Tiqqun `Olam*. This is what we as Jews are supposed to be here for in the first place. If we aren’t doing that, how are we worthy of the name *Yehudim*?

Another Jewish participant in Tel Aviv, TA5.FJI, said that “having returned to the Jewish community has insulated me quite a bit with ‘Jewish Privilege.’” This was something, she explained,

We regularly speak about in study circle sessions . . . the same way my community insulates me with this Jewish privilege, I can help insulate my Palestinian friends when they are here. If I come through the checkpoint with them and show my identification as an Israeli, I am always asked what I am doing with them. I explain that we meet together and discuss how Jews and Muslims can live in peace. Sometimes this elicits laughter. Sometimes scowls. But they always waive us through, sometimes immediately after I say this.

In Jerusalem, J2.MMP explained,

When I am in here [in Israel] I try to surround myself with you guys [the Jewish participants at the Hashlamah Project] because I believe your Jewish privilege in Israel insulates us a bit when you are around. Not entirely, but if they raid a study circle meeting and claim it was all terrorists, they will have some explaining to do to the public if most of the people are Jews.

He likened the idea to White privilege, in the United States, but in relation to Israel, it is a Jewish Privilege above any other group, including above European groups classified as White historically. He stated that

In America they talk about “White privilege.” I guess you can say I have that even though I am Arab. My father was British and so Israelis see me, and they often just think I am an Ashkenazi Jew. I see Palestinians who are darker than me, or who have more stereotypical “Arab” traits being harassed and mistreated. I can be just down the street and have no trouble from the same people.

Even more specifically, an Ethiopian Jewish participant in Jerusalem, J8.MJI, explained that this privilege is not even a Jewish privilege nor a White privilege, but a specifically *Ashkenazi* privilege, attained regardless of how dark the Ashkenazi Jew is, or how light the *S’fardic* Jew might happen to be. From Ethiopians’ perspectives, both are akin to an Israeli version of White privilege. J8.MJI asserted, “The Ashkenazim and even *S’fardim* need to help protect us and support us. They have it easier. They need to challenge racism when they hear it when visiting family or at the dinner table.” He made the poignant observation that if you claim to be one of the “good guys,” but do nothing when people infringe on the rights of others, or speak derogatorily about them, then are you really good?

Ashkenazim need to not be afraid. There are many good Ashkenazim. But if you keep your mouth closed when you hear or witness racism, then are you really good? A good man would speak up. So we call on all good Ashkenazim, and to *S’fardim*, to stand with your Ethiopian and Palestinian brothers.

J8.MJI said that he has seen some progress away from this dichotomy in recent years. He said emphatically,

This has happened to some extent, and it makes me feel emboldened when I stand with people willing to diminish their privilege to insulate us. Don’t stand on the sidelines. You have to get involved with us as accomplices, not just ‘allies’ like the current trend is for leftist Ashkenazim to say.

A further refinement of Jewish insulation and face-to-face dialogue, is a concept, discussed particularly by members of the Jerusalem Chapter, about the role of Jewish participation and

activism for Palestinians while in the West Bank, rather than remaining in the safe insular bubble of Israel. I have coded this sub-theme as *more diverse cross-section of people working directly in the West Bank*. J2.MMP explained that “Israelis can come to *us* in the West Bank,” rather than Palestinians always crossing checkpoints to attend the Jerusalem Study Circle. “I know there is real fear about this because it has been suggested, but always gets put off. We can have meetings in my home or any number of peoples’ homes who would be happy to host them.” He asserted that just as there is an insulation Jews can provide them in Israel, Palestinians can similarly insulate Jews by vouching for them as vetted friends of the Palestinian people, while in the West Bank. This, in turn, would help mold the perspectives of many Palestinians to see that there are many Israeli Jews fighting for them. J2.MMP concluded,

A lot of Israelis think they are in big danger in the West Bank, but just like they can insulate us here, we can insulate them there. I have seen this happen in real life with a close friend of mine who is Jewish.

This perspective was not solely voiced by Palestinian participants. In the interview with the Gush Etzion settler, J7.FJS, she explained,

I would like to see more people taking bold steps. I am unwilling to go out on a limb and invite people to a study circle in the West Bank if I am alone. If Israelis came to visit and we had Arab members of the Jerusalem study circle coordinate with open-minded Muslims in the West Bank, then I think we could do something really revolutionary and world changing. If we could face our fears and interact here in a large group, a lot of good would come of that. Alone we are like one tiny stick. Together, bundled and united without distance between us, we are strong and unbreakable.

J7.FJS further noted that “the threats I face are very much intertwined with my work with the Hashlamah Project,” She was referring to joining the Jerusalem Chapter and crossing to attend meetings periodically, and also having informal meetings in the West Bank, that are not directly associated with the Hashlamah Project.

I attempt no activism more radical than meeting together, praying together and having dinner together. That is it. But I have done this not only with the Jerusalem study circle, but in the West Bank. It has not happened often. There are only a handful of people who I

trust enough to have these types of engagements, but it is something that nevertheless happens from time to time. The risks I face for this are vast. There are many Palestinians who would kill me or kill any Muslim friends for being friends with me, meeting with me or accepting that we can both live here as neighbors, without violating the dignity of either.

Under the sub-theme of *education and outreach*, there was significant discussion about seminars, akin to what was conducted in 2014 in the pilot study as part of my doctoral research. This includes *face-to-face discussion*, as well *relevant historical seminars on Jewish-Sufi history and Islamic origins in Arabian Jewish sectarian milieu of Late Antiquity*. There was a lot of interest in me returning to conduct further seminars and educate facilitators on this subject, so that participants, in turn, could better impart this knowledge to people in their regions. In all, there were essentially five major ways the participants mentioned to achieve *education and outreach* towards *understanding of Hashlamah*: *group-specific outreach and support*; *education*; *history*; “*cracks in the narrative*,” and discussion of *connections that would not have been made*. In Tel Aviv, TA4.MDI said,

When you come from a historically persecuted religious minority community it easy to understand how oppressed people feel. Even if you yourself did not grow up being oppressed, you learn your history and you hear stories from your grandparents.

He was suggesting that this sort of education in historical oppression can help others gain insight into their current psychology, actions, and reactions, and, in turn, help develop empathy. “This should cause us to empathize with those who are going through this sort of suffering and deprivation of rights” He said, further,

Jews and *Duruz* both know what it is like to be subjugated. Even though our community originates from Muhammad’s own family, we are not seen as Muslims, and that is perfectly okay with me. But if the government ruling you is an Islamic State, as during the Caliphate eras, then this is a real problem to be *Yehudi* or *Derzi*.

He noted that many Muslims simply do not know these histories. They assume that both Jews and Druze developed an antipathy towards their suffering purely as a result of nationalism. In reality, he explained, it is more complicated.

Sometimes there were laws specifically forbidding Jews from riding horses or walking on the same street as Muslims. What do you think happens when those people from countries where this happened to their ancestors come to have a Jewish State? It is not right, but they take their revenge. *Duruz* commit the same transgression here too.

Understanding is not the same as justifying, however, he explained. “It is not okay. Instead we should say ‘I was oppressed so I vow never to oppress others.’ We should be at the forefront of defending the rights that Palestinians are being denied.”

In Tel Aviv, TA5.FJI spoke to this point.

I grew up in a New York Jewish household that was staunchly Orthodox. I was named after a Biblical character who was epitomized by female restriction and male subjugation of daughters. That was what my parents had in mind when I was born. As a result, I became a very rebellious teenager. I saw myself ethnically as a Jew who could never stop being a Jew, but the only real exposure I had to Judaism was from Orthodox communities in New York City, and to a lesser extent New Jersey.

For her, this “educational sheltering” in her community, restrained her from learning about the history and beliefs of the perceived “other.”

Before making *teshuvah* (meaning, essentially, that she came back to the Jewish community) and coming back to the *derekh*, [meaning the Jewish religious path] I formally took *shahadah* as a Sunni Hanafi Muslim. My parents sent me on annual trips to Israel that began with Birthright but didn’t stop for many years. They would find things going on and sign me up for them. The goal was to keep me out of trouble and instill *tzniut* [modesty].

“This,” she said, she “apparently didn’t have in [her parents’] eyes.” She went on that it was “ironically” during a visit to “Jerusalem on one of these trips I began breaking away from the group I was with, as I had done years before,” so that she began to see through the cracks in the narrative she was raised on.

Instead of hanging out on the beach as I did other years before, I had been befriended by Palestinians. I met one person, got to be good friends, they introduced me to their family,

and friends. They invited me to Ramallah, others invited me to Bethlehem and other West Bank cities.

It was over the course of her visits to the West Bank that she “visited *masajid* many times, learned a lot of Arabic and a lot about Islam.” She soon “took *shahadah* in the West Bank and was warmly accepted by Palestinians I knew, who knew that I came from a Jewish family.”

Today, she feels she has reached something of a Hegelian state of personal “synthesis,” considering herself “Judeo-Sufi,” rather than simply stating she is “Jewish” or “Muslim” or “ex-Muslim” as some see her. She described this process as

coming back to Judaism in a way from the Hashlamah project teaching me about historical modes of Judaism that were compatible with an Islamic view of religion and revelation. I don’t see any conflict between saying I am Jewish or saying I am Muslim. That is because in the beginning Muhammad himself wrote that we both comprise one single people and nation [in the *Constitution of Medina*]. Those are his words. They are not my own. That is what real Islam taught once upon a time.

In Jerusalem, J3.MJI said that empathy with the perceived other “can be realized through outreach and continued invitation to things like our study circle . . . [and] through education.”

Before getting involved with the Hashlamah Project, he explained,

I had never heard about the rich history and legacy of “Judeo-Sufi” rabbis, the Maimonidean Dynasty engaging in this; meditation retreats in North Africa by Jews and Muslims; the entire Egyptian Jewish community making salat with Hebrew prayers? I didn’t know about *Chovot Ha’Levavot*’s original Judeo-Arabic usage of terms of like *jihad* and *istislam* to describe the Jewish religion.

In Yellow Springs, YS2.MJ said: “We all need to stand united against our common enemies and realize that from the start we have been pitted against one another by these Nazis.” He explains that Hitler himself “funded the Iraq pogrom in 1941. He funded the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who every Palestinian I have talked to has never even heard of,” through his brother, who initiated the *Farhud* pogrom. “I’ve learned in our Study Circle about how the majority of Palestinians never supported him and were terrorized and murdered by his gang.”

This knowledge of history has allowed him to see that this is a conflict as shaped by terrorists who were themselves shaped by Nazis.

The Jewish terrorists like Irgun, Stern-Lechi were shaped by their PTSD from the Holocaust. That doesn't excuse it, but they saw everything as an existential threat to the Jewish people. Everywhere they looked all they saw were enemies seeking to destroy them. On the Palestinian side, we have people who act in the spirit of the Grand Mufti's gangs and claim to be doing this in the name of the people. Sure, some of them support this kind of thing because they feel they have no options.

In Israel, he explained, he has "met many people who know for a fact their grandparents were members of Jewish terrorist organizations, and yet they still make excuses for them," somehow seeing their activities as defensible, whereas those from Hamas would be seen simply as terrorism—almost in an offensive sense. Some Israelis, he explained,

even admit that they were terrorists, but still rationalize it as okay because it was the "only way" for Jews to be safe. So, if I am going to say "don't judge Jews by our lowest moral common denominators" then I have to apply the same principle to how I view Palestinians.

He said that to bring this knowledge to more people, and thereby edify their understanding of these conflicts, and subsequently build empathy with one another, he likes

the idea that was proposed recently of their being seminars on the roots of this conflict, as well as seminars on navigating these fears, with some people who have lived facing these threats explaining how they did it. Not just Jews and Muslims but radicals from eras past who are still with us in "retirement." We can learn a lot from them and not have to repeat the same mistakes and suffer the same fate.

Another Yellow Springs participant, YS5.MJ, said,

I think if you (at least for our Chapter) put on seminars about confronting fear and moving forward with activism in spite of it, that would go a long way. Other Chapters could have people who have shown seniority do the same thing but here I think you would be an ideal person to do that. You've been doing this sort of thing for as long as I've been alive and I appreciate the guidance you've given me.

In Jerusalem, J6.FJI said much the same, that what is needed is "education, perhaps from books, articles, videos or speakers on this subject."

Yellow Springs participant YS4.MJ said that the goals we are looking to achieve “could be realized by people who have been doing this sort of activism for longer making themselves available, regularly, for such discussions and counseling if this becomes desirable for their communities.” He said that “education is the key,” and must be infused with our activism, if we hope to do more than proverbially “preach to the choir,” so to speak. YS4.MJ stated,

I have learned so much in our circle that has broadened my understanding of the history and roots of this conflict. That has allowed me to better empathize with Palestinians, and I have seen some of them have the same outcome from learning about how the Nazis pitted us against each other and essentially created this conflict.

For some, there was a suggestion that emphasizing the “One federal state solution” often theorized by various Hashlamah Chapters, could be beneficial. Others, more anarchistic in orientation, suggested *questioning of and disbelief in borders* themselves.

All seemed to agree that there must be multi-layered *support systems*, especially *Support when there is job loss*. In Tel Aviv, TA1.MJI explained,

Ideally, if activists and people dedicated towards certain causes could network better and provide each other support, job recommendations, employment itself, housing or any of the other things that are potentially threatened by our activism, then this could allow us to operate more confidently, without fear of reprisal.

This was not the only type of support suggested. Across chapters came key suggestions for *psychological support systems within group*. TA1.MJI said,

We need to talk about our fears together more. These are things that we are often embarrassed to say to other activists. We want to sound very serious and dedicated. We don’t want to openly admit that we are one incident away from dropping out [and that if we do this it] could perhaps be a central point of regular discussion, so we can support each other, almost like a recovery group. We are ultimately addicts to ease and comfort. We want that. If we have it we want to keep it. So, we have to realize that ease isn’t going to happen, and we need to stop chasing it.

In Yellow Springs, YS5.MJ said that “guidance from you or from other older members of our Chapter has been very helpful for perspective.” Psychological support made all the difference in terms of perseverance. He added,

Feeling like I was burning out and couldn't persevere was explained to me as totally normal for activists. Initially I saw it as my own weakness that I was destined to succumb to. I didn't realize that this is almost a rite of passage.

Whether or not there is need for *support when there is job loss*, there is a very real issue of *financial or housing support* for some activists, that leads to drop out from Study Circles.

TA4.MDI explained that "as we all get to know each other and the old become acquainted and trust the new, it is easy to be there for each other and support one another in each and every way possible." He explained that "this could be emotional support," but it could also mean

even just lending someone money who I know is short on rent money this month. This is the way we treat each other in our study circle. We are a family. Once I know someone is my family, I can trust them and let down my wall of *taqiyyah*.

Though the Hashlamah Project was founded on the premise that face-to-face interactions are key to creating understanding and building empathy with each other, many have suggested more *online networking* to supplement Study Circles. In Yellow Springs, YS3.MM said

I'm all about the Internet. People say that it just causes arguments, you say that, and that's true. But it also brings people together. Yes, you will argue with people who are never going to like you and what you stand for, but you can also form Facebook discussion groups, or make email lists to converse with people who do see eye-to-eye with you.

Navigation and coping with threats: Preparedness and training. The third principal theme emerging as a form of *Navigation and Coping* was *preparedness and training*. The first subtheme in this category I have phrased *paranoia/preparedness for worst case scenario* and the second as *martial arts training/self-defense*. Kurt Cobain famously sang the words, attributed to Joseph Heller from posters of the movie version of *Catch-22*, "just because you're paranoid, don't mean they're not after you." (Cobain & Powers, 1991). For activists, this can almost become a mantra. YS2.MJ explains that he has "very successfully insulated myself from these threats. I wish I could hit the reset button and start over with activism because I definitely would take steps to insulate myself. I would start by being a little more paranoid."

In Jerusalem, J4.MJI said “I treat all of my fears, anxieties, and hypothetical scenarios as if they can and will happen. This seems to keep me safer than assuming there is no possibility of these threats being made good on will ever happen.” Thus, a sort of “operational paranoia” seemed to be something of a method that some activists in this study employed. J4.MJI elaborated:

Support in general would be nice. But with this type of activism you don’t make a lot of friends who are not already engaged in the same type of thing. Maybe if we didn’t stress opposition to the occupation so much and just worked on ‘coexisting’ without confronting the hard issues we could get more people into supporting a Palestinian state. Maybe if we toned things down and changed our agenda, more people would accept us? And perhaps if we didn’t stress any issue at all, we could just gain more friends and in time they’d learn. But that is not our path. We confront problems we see in this world. That is the only way for us. So, we will not make a lot of friends from normal circles of society. We instead must support each other in every way possible. We should bond together to support each other emotionally, psychologically and in any way. If someone needs somewhere to sleep between places they live, then we should let them stay with us. When people travel to give speeches or conduct seminars like you have, we should have them stay with us even if they insist on a hotel. For me and several others, this is how we are already doing things.

Some activists felt that the way to persevere in the face of threats to their safety or lives was to train in *martial arts* and, in some cases, obtain and train with firearms. In Tel Aviv TA2.MJI said that “I believe activists should train in self-defense.”

His training in martial arts and firearms began after experiencing threats. He recounts “I began taking martial arts classes after that. I started lifting weights because I was not in the best shape.” Before that, he was not particularly interested in fitness, or fighting, let alone owning a weapon. “If someone wanted to hurt me, they could have,” he said. After he had been training for a while, he began to look for “holes” in his defense against the threats he faced from activism. “I applied for a permit to own a firearm, which was delayed several times after submitting it—in case someone were to try to break in to my apartment.” Still, he doesn’t understand the obsession that some have with self-defense; he explained

All of these things are like a seatbelt [precautionary measures to help you keep moving forward with your work] Some people wear them, others don't. But if you wear them, you do so just in case of the worst-case scenario. Still, you do not drive like a paranoid person. You just drive and be careful. You go where you need to go.

For him, it was a transformative experience, and increased his ability to confidently press forward in the face of threats.

I can only compare how I felt before beginning Krav [Krav Maga, a self-defense and fighting approach developed for the IDF], and how I feel now. [I] feel confident that if attacked I can handle myself. So, this allows me to be more outspoken than I was before when I was worried about extremists attacking me.

In this way, he said that he had not only persevered but increased outspokenness, now feeling more secure in how he would deal with threats. His suggestion is for there to be “activist workshops or seminars where ideas like what you are talking about with persevering in the face of threats is discussed, and there could also be basic self-defense courses.” This, he explained, “would go a long way in helping us all feel more secure so we can speak our minds.”

In Yellow Springs, YS5.MJ said that since taking self-defense training, he has felt “much safer.” He started going to the gym and obtained a concealed carry firearms permit, valid in Ohio with reciprocity in most of the United States. “I hate to feel like I’m being paranoid like some Ohio gun nut, but I’m not going back to the ICU [intensive care unit], so that’s just how it has to be.” Beyond that, YS5.MJ said: “[The] Chapter has been very supportive. Everyone visited me when I was laid up in the hospital. You stepped up to let me come to your Kung Fu classes for free.” He explained, that Chapter members even started a GoFundMe page “to cover medical expenses and bills while I was unable to get a new job (or even get out of bed for a while).” He said that this is “the sort of thing we need more of. We’ve all been there to some extent. Maybe we haven’t all been beaten-the-fuck-up like me for it, but we all face fears and threats.”

Summary of Findings

The Hashlamah Project participants successfully navigated an environment in which they were at risk for threats to their employment, familial stability, safety, or life. While all are on one level or another navigating fears that they were vulnerable to, there were varying degrees of success and, seemingly, looming burn-out in some cases.

Given that opponents of such social justice, reconciliation activists, and revolutionaries, tend to target them due to perceived vulnerability, the support systems and coping mechanisms for these participants led to an exhibited confidence that likely deterred those who would pose threats, in much the same way that predators in Nature do not typically attack the perceived strong, but instead go after the weak, sick, old, and otherwise vulnerable.

I have learned from my own past failures—from which I have sequentially rebounded—as well as those of others. I have further benefited from discussing the shared risks and coping mechanisms and solutions to navigate those risks. In the interviews, many of the members conveyed a renewed sense of focus and perseverance from this process as well, which has proven effective, even simply through discussing the threats openly like this.

Throughout the interview process, the participants were actively engaged in discussions, not simply checking off answers on a survey. This resulted in sharing of living experiences and stories that gave real world insights into application, not mere sterile theorizing. While our discussion of the results did not extend into recommending approaches and behaviors, the participants realized that they could practice shared strategies without my prompting, and, by discussion with each other after regrouping from the interviews. In this way, the interviews seemed to not only serve as prompts, but as a catalyst for introspection and evolution.

The results of the study, and strategies that seem to naturally emerge from reading the answers to interview questions are significant, and, as stated, seem able to serve as a catalyst for activist growth and coping. In the next chapter, I discuss the research findings from my perspective as participant and facilitator of the Hashlamah Project. In addition, I deliberate on implications of the research, with emphasis on the ways in which coping mechanisms and strategies for navigating relevant threats can emerge from this study.

Chapter V: What the Data Mean and What the Implications Are

The focus of this chapter is reflection on whether, in this age and time, the kind of work that we are engaged in in the Hashlamah Project—creating peaceful dialog constructive and sustainable relations between “historical enemies”—is sustainable and if so, how? As well, the chapter will explore what the results of this study mean in the global world where politicians and Military Industrial Complexes benefit from creating and sustaining division?

To this end, the chapter is an interpretation of the findings, and notation of practical application of the findings, presented in the preceding chapter. Here, I also focus on the implications for leadership and change. In discussing the implications of the findings of the interviews in the preceding chapter, I examine what stood out as the most prominent threats experienced and reflect on the way interviewees from the Hashlamah Project dealt with the threats. This will lead to thoughts on how these findings are to be interpreted in relation to existing relevant literature. I further look at the themes that emerged, and how they relate to one another. For instance, reflection on gender-related experiences and threats will naturally and intersectionally overlap with activism for social justice. Furthermore, in conclusion, I look at what new insights emerge from this study compared to existing knowledge the literature talked about. Finally, in this chapter, I provide recommendations for action and for further study, borne of the data, as well as closing reflections on my experiences with the process. I reflect on the interviews, their relationship to the relevant literature and the implications, both for future scholarship and research, as well as for activist groups facing the sorts of threats described herein. I examine the questions these interviews raised and the answers I arrived at. I look, in conclusion, at what was learned from doing this research and how the process of conducting this study changed me as a person, a scholar-practitioner, and as a professional working as a leader to

encourage positive change. In conclusion, I look at how this study can inform future works and activism going forward and how it can help activists and revolutionaries move forward as a persistent minority influence and ending dominant minority rule.

Existing Relevant Literature and Theories

New insights have emerged from this study compared to existing literature about nonviolent resistance and change. To date, there is very little literature actually articulating what means and methods are effective at coping with threats to activism—whether direct threats of government repression or terrorism. Even more to the point, these data have highlighted the perspective of direct participants, and what they have found that works for them—in their own words. These findings confirm existing research and theories relevant to intellectual, relational, activist frames of leadership, and expand upon it greatly, from the perspective of those directly participating in activism.

Key to understanding and coping with threats and risks inherent in activism in such a contentious and often dangerous setting, are the supportive relationships that are nurtured within activist groups. It is significant, therefore, that Hashlamah Project uses and manifests the idea and ideals of relational leadership. Let me briefly explain the precepts of that paradigm and then explain its role in navigating and coping with risks and threats among Hashlamah members.

Relational leadership can employ a variety of tools to trigger empathy as a way of helping one understand and impart the position of the other which is key to the work of the Hashlamah Project. Relational leadership emerged from dealing with very complex situations, such as those faced by the Hashlamah Project's relational process of people working together to accomplish change to benefit the common positive goal, for the common good. This inclusive approach trusts the process to bring about the necessary changes group members agree to work

toward, and the data show that that this has indeed happened, automatically, naturally, and as part of the process of the Hashlamah Project study circles themselves. For instance, TA3.FJI said that she has “seen so many hearts changed through dialog alone” and by simply “listening to others—particularly those who have had less of a voice in society.” J2.MMP said that the structure of the Hashlamah Project Study Circle has “given me the opportunity to hear many perspectives I otherwise would not have.” Just from “hearing these stories [it] helps me better understand” the perceived other and “why they act the way they act.” There was no group context for the interviews, no comparing of notes or answers by participants, and yet the data in the interviews maintained remarkable thematic consistency.

One of the defining features of the relational leadership model is that it is “vision-driven” rather than “position-driven,” with the ultimate goal being to unite people in achieving a shared vision rather than providing titles and creating a hierarchy of positions (Komives et al., 2009). This is in stark contrast to a personalized vision, which is projected onto a group by an individual member. Komives, et al. (2009) explained,

Personalized vision refers to a person, usually the person with legitimate authority, announcing a dream or plan and imposing it on others. Participants seem to have little choice and must adopt this vision, which results in varying degrees of personal ownership or commitment. Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric (GE), is an excellent example. (p. 80)

While this was not explicitly detailed in interviews, it was implicit and underlying all of the responses, as it is a founding principle of the organization. We see examples of this on the main Hashlamah Project website, where it is stated “this is a collaborative process, not a top down dictation of rigid, inflexible dictates.” What stands out in relation to leadership and change implications, is that the Hashlamah vision is instead a socialized vision. It is one that all members of the group can relate to and help create, with an emphasis on inclusion that involves making every member of the group feel welcome, as well as equal, comfortable, and heard. This is consistent with

the five concepts of purpose, inclusion, empowerment, ethics, and process, mapped by Komives and Wagner (2009), with individuals “concurrently represent[ing] and influenc[ing] the whole” (p. 86).

Relational leadership’s relevance to the Hashlamah Project, and this Activist-participatory action research, is found in the fact that leadership within the group, while an informal position and unofficial, still ethically requires a responsibility to “empower others” or provide tools and encouragement for them to empower themselves to do and to be their best, helping members reach their full potentials as group members (Riera, 2009).

The Hashlamah Project and Intellectual Leadership

The interviews confirmed an emphasis on ideas and values that transcend immediate practical needs and still change and transform their social milieu. Burns (1978) explained that intellectual leaders were one of the four types of transformational leaders (the others again being reform, revolutionary, and heroic or charismatic); an intellectual leader works with others to identify needed change, then creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of a group. To this end, then, YS4.MJ explains that the Hashlamah Project is “devoted to observing ideas and values that transcend immediate practical needs and still change and transform their social environment.” They add that “we maintain a vision to transform society by raising social consciousness, and by creating a clear vision of the future.”

In Chapter II, I looked at examples of intellectual leadership, such as Pappé (2004, 2008) and Said (1979a, 1979b) and the immense backlash that can cost such leaders professionally. The same was found throughout interviews, whether numerous local intellectual leaders similarly experienced high professional costs and financial repercussions, such as YS4.MJ, who was professionally targeted for his outspoken opposition to the Israeli government and military killing Gazan civilians. TA1.MJI made reference to this as well, calling on Study Circles to form

support systems for activists when jobs are lost. He said that, apart from all the family and government threats, “the big problem has been holding down a steady job [and] that as long as I am involved in activism like this, I will not be able to get a job, even in Tel Aviv.” YS2.MJ’s mother was even doxxed and eventually was fired because of her son’s activism (months after the interviews). YS1.MJ said that he has given up countless employment opportunities because of his activism.

Vulnerability and Empathy

In Chapter II, I looked at how media and arts, in the form of documentaries, explored issues related to Israel-Palestine conflict, justice and reconciliation, and sought ways to trigger empathy to help the viewer understand the position of the perceived other. Empathy, it was discovered from both the literature and the interviews in Chapter IV, is an absolute requirement for change, justice and thus reconciliation. Throughout the interviews, this was a common theme that emerged: people on both sides saw their own personal struggles with injustice, whether based on their sex, gender-identity, or nonnormative ethnicities, in relation to the broader issue at hand of Palestinian human rights and social justice.

Navigating and coping with threats yielded productive results including self-care and psychologically confronting and embracing vulnerability. It was seen how this can catalyze empathy with the perceived “Other.” For instance, YS2.MJ said that being “a target of Nazi boneheads,” led to empathy and “helps me to understand what Palestinians feel.” J3.MJI said it is about lowering walls and embracing vulnerability. “Vulnerability and empathy are cornerstones to understanding each other and moving forward . . . we should embrace it,” so that “by embracing vulnerability we can better empathize with others who have been put in vulnerable

positions.” YS4.MJ said that by honoring dignity—particularly that of oppressed, or marginalized groups—“we all strengthen ourselves.”

Other examples of the importance of empathy were seen in the interviews. J8.MJI explained his empathy derived from his African refugee origins as an Ethiopian Jew. YS5.MJ, a Black Jew in the Midwest of the United States explained that the threats he faces are amplified by his ethnicity, which thus causes empathy with the perceived other. Similarly, from Yellow Springs, YS3.MM explained that, the discrimination he feels in the United States or in Palestine makes him empathize with perceived others in the United States, people suffering from racially-driven police brutality. J4.MJI didn’t have empathy with the Palestinian people until he came to learn what it feels like to be seen as Arab-looking in the United States, as a Mizrahi Jew.

Intersectionally, seeing the struggle for which one has a personal affinity in related, but often seemingly separate struggles, is a matter borne of empathy. In Jerusalem, J5.FJI explained that the fight for Palestinian equal rights and justice is inseparable from her fight for feminism, drawing on her own experiences and these feminist issues, to intersectionally empathize with the plight of the Palestinian people. Similar examples are seen such as TA5.FJI, who recounted her horrific experience being “detained, and violated by Israeli officials,” which, she said, was nothing short of sexual assault and torture; TA3.FJI received death and rape threats for nothing more than writing editorials.

The experiences of individual activists can blend seamlessly into each seemingly single-issue cause and the grassroots activism’s campaigning for those issues which members feel strongly about. It can focus on the people involved as the basis for the movement, utilizing collective action from the local level to effect change at the local, regional, national, or international

level, with bottom-up decision making. This was particularly obvious in the numerous responses about Jewish participation as well as insulation at protests, along with Jewish visibility in the West Bank in a pro-Palestinian activism setting. This has formed the basis for all Hashlamah Project work from its inception and codifying principles as laid out in 2012 and which cannot be divorced from the context of participant interviews, as it forms the backbone of how the organizations and chapters operate.

History, Empathy, and Dignity: The “Battlefield of History”

Intellectual leadership is not always confined to academia. Rabkin (2006) looked at history and historical-critical historiography of Israel-Palestine as “the battlefield of history” (p. 11). George Orwell (1949) famously said, “he who controls the past, controls the future” (p. 35). It is with this understanding that Hashlamah Project’s focus on history, and the calls of so many of those interviewed to have more extensive historical-critical seminars and education to further the aims of the groups and desires of the individuals involved, can be properly appreciated.

J3.MJI said that empathy with the perceived other can be realized through outreach and continued invitation to things like our study circle,” and “through education.” Before getting involved with the Hashlamah Project, he explained,

I had never heard about the rich history and legacy of “Judeo-Sufi” rabbis, the Maimonidean Dynasty engaging in this; meditation retreats in North Africa by Jews and Muslims; the entire Egyptian Jewish community making *salat* with Hebrew prayers? I didn’t know about *Chovot Ha’Levavot*’s original Judeo-Arabic usage of terms of like *jihad* and *istislam* to describe the Jewish religion.

YS2.MJ said that through discussions of history,

I have learned so much in our circle that has broadened my understanding of the history and roots of this conflict. That has allowed me to better empathize with Palestinians, and I have seen some of them have the same outcome from learning about how the Nazis pitted us against each other and essentially created this conflict.

TA4.MDI said: “When you come from a historically persecuted religious minority community it easy to understand how oppressed people feel. Even if you yourself did not grow up being oppressed, you learn your history and you hear stories from your grandparents.” He suggested that education in historical oppression can help others gain insight into their current psychology, actions, and reactions, and in turn helps us develop empathy for one another. “This should cause us to empathize with those who are going through this sort of suffering and deprivation of rights”

Fear and threats of violence, terrorism, or even prison or political assassination, are all concerns that come to the forefront of activism that involves Jews and Muslims generally, and Israelis and Palestinians specifically. These threats might come from actual terrorist groups, and radical religious leaders from either relevant religion, or they might come from the state apparatus itself, as the participants reported.

In numerous anecdotal examples, participants warned that fear can escalate to mutual demonization, whereas one way to restore humanity can be the acknowledgment of each other’s human worth and dignity as human beings. YS1.MJ explained that “we all have a deep, human desire to be treated as something of value.” He said,

The vast majority of people just want to live in peace, with dignity. I am on nobody’s side in this sick madness. But I am with people who want to unlearn the hate! That means honoring the dignity of people, even if they have been conditioned to hate me.

J4.MJI explained,

The glue that holds all of our relationships together is the mutual recognition of the desire to be seen, heard, listened to, and treated fairly; to be recognized, understood, and to feel safe in the world . . . Dignity has the potential to change the world, but only if we look at each other the way we look at ourselves.

J6.FJI explained that “having someone listen to your experiences and perspective is in many ways restoring your dignity because it means your experiences are valid to the listener.”

This is clearly key to Hashlamah Project work, not only in our normal modes of operation, but also in how we approach facing fear. To face fear, we must understand its root case. In the interviews, participants paid ample attention to what their fears are about and where they come from. Hicks (2011) explained and identified violence that causes fear as so often being borne from a violation of dignity. In order to acknowledge and show dignity we must allow ourselves to be vulnerable, and we must approach others' vulnerabilities with empathy and nonjudgment. This was discussed by participants at length and across Chapters, such as in the interviews with YS5.MJ, TA2.MJI and J3.MJI.

Mackenzie et al. (2013a) explained that autonomy and *vulnerability* are not opposites but mutually related essential elements of what she considers the natural state of our existence. Anderson and Honneth (2005) agreed that exercising autonomy requires the recognition of others' for such exercises fully realized. They argued that autonomy and vulnerability to others are naturally and essentially "entwined." From this one can infer that this vulnerability and recognition are key to reconciliation and should be cornerstone to the Hashlamah Project. Similarly, vulnerability is entwined with the concept and experience of facing fear. In this way, we are opening ourselves up to the perceived Other in Hashlamah Project study circle sessions and are at the same time being vulnerable in a broader sense, in that we are making ourselves vulnerable by engaging in this sort of activism at all.

Krznaric (2014) asserted that our brains are literally wired for social connection, and related to that, learning empathy is "the art of stepping imaginatively into the shoes of another person, understanding their feelings and perspectives, and using that understanding to guide your actions" (p. 1). He suggested that engaging in things as simple as chatting to strangers and immersing yourself in someone else's perspective and experiences can help build empathy and

repair the fissures in a world of estrangement and disconnection. This is at the core of the Hashlamah Project's work, and the importance of Krznaric's theory is borne out by the results of the interviews in the study at hand. Examples of this in particular are seen in sections of Chapter IV in the theme of *empathy with other groups through sharing*, again, exemplified by the anecdotal experience of TA3.FJI in the marketplace, or J3.MJI similarly interacting with a Muslim man at a marketplace on Via Dolorosa, which naturally led to a place of empathy and mutual understanding.

Further relevant to this discussion is Hicks's (2011) methodology on role of dignity in conflict. Hicks documented how the acknowledgment of each other's human worth and dignity as human beings is essential in reconciliation. Hicks explained that dignity, or the pursuit of it, is a primary motivating force behind all human interaction. Because it is so central to all human interaction, when it is violated, the response can be hatred, aggression, and violence. For this reason, empathy and means of reinforcing dignity, factor so strongly into the responses in the interviews. When people are treated with dignity, they connect and overcome past estrangement. A beautiful example was when TA3.FJI felt stared at by a lone Arab man, yet they talked and connected. This view was similarly reflected in the introspections of participants TA1.MJI, J2.MMP, J4.MJ, J6.FJI, J7.FJS, YS1.MJ, YS2.MJ, YS4.MJ, and YS5.MJ.

Hicks (2011) noted that a firm understanding of dignity is rare, thus, these sorts of violations occur with tragic frequency, giving rise to widespread violence. As such, insights into issues related to dignity and mutual recognition thereof, are essential not only to activism such as that the participants in this study are engaged in, but also in focusing further activism and reinforcing it with progress and results that motivate and renew efforts—making it clear that the activism is in fact worth the risks and costs, because it is yielding positive results. Hicks's (2011)

ideas raised the question: should we respond to threats of violence with more fear, which may only further estrange and compound pre-existing violations of dignity—thus, possibly looping to more threats for activism? Hicks suggested that the answer lies not in fear, but in acknowledgement and giving dignity to those who might otherwise be feared.

In order to acknowledge and show dignity we must allow ourselves to be vulnerable and approach others' vulnerabilities with empathy and nonjudgment. Mackenzie et al. (2013a) suggested that vulnerability is central to the very concept of ethics. This was seen prominently in the interviews with YS5.MJ, TA2.MJ, and J3.MJ. Vulnerability is intertwined with the concept and experience of facing fear. With allowing ourselves to be vulnerable, we are opening up to the perceived Other in Hashlamah Project Study Circle sessions and are, at the same time, being vulnerable in a broader sense, in that we are making ourselves vulnerable by engaging in this sort of activism at all.

Just as Hicks (2011) called for transforming humiliation to dignity, then, Cockburn's (1998) work integrated vulnerability and common humanity. Cockburn looked at a variety of spaces where people are engaging in peace work within areas of conflict. Her work is perhaps the most directly relevant to my overarching dissertation question; Cockburn asked how those doing such work fill the dangerous space between them "with words in place of bullets?" (p. 1).

Frank (2010) argued that we are "born into stories" (p. 38) that must be understood by one another; thus, to truly understand one another, we must be able to listen to the stories of the perceived Other. The interviews in this study, and the anecdotes relayed therein, to this effect, contribute to this discussion.

Solidarity and Insulation as a Dominant Theme

The example of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem, from the documentary *My Neighbourhood*, discussed in Chapter II, illustrated collusion between the police and settlers, which echoed the experience of Hashlamah participants who described pro-Palestinian protests in Israel. Similarly, as Noy (2015) described, when activist Salah Diab was in the presence of Jewish protesters and social justice activists who stood side by side with their Palestinian neighbors to denounce and oppose the oppressive acts of the State, there was an increase in solidarity between the two communities and their willingness to break down the illusion of separation between the perceived other. There is a strong tie-in with the work of the Hashlamah Project and the calls for further involvement and insulation from Jewish members, both in Israel proper and in the West Bank, by members interviewed such as J1.FMI. Diab, encouraged by the fact that Palestinian protest has moved Jewish hearts towards justice, noted:

I have no words to describe how I feel about our Jewish friends who come here every week. Love. Excitement. They are the ones who hold us here . . . They give us a lot of strength. I am sure that because of you, the authorities haven't kicked out more people.

Salah noted the insulating factor that their privilege extends to the people they are standing in solidarity with, much as in the case of Selma and other massive civil rights protests in the American south during the 1960s. Barghouti (2014) termed these “principled Israeli anti-colonialists [who are] committed to *full* Palestinians rights” (p. 407) rather than, as I have discussed, the general Israeli Left, which often times seems to want conditional recognition of basic, innate human rights for the Palestinian people. Barghouti noted that while these fully committed Jews have played a small role in the movement, it is a role that is significant both for Palestinians and Israelis alike. This was echoed in the interviews with participants such as TA3.FJI and TA5.FJI, who saw such participation as necessary to future social “breakthroughs” in this area.

Positionality Reflections

One of the potential challenges in this research, as noted in the section about research ethics in Chapter III, is that my (real or perceived) influence could indirectly impact the course of participant conversations. This, however, turned out to be less of a concern to those within the Hashlamah Project. Though I founded the group as whole, and the Yellow Springs study circle in particular, many—if not most—participants in global Hashlamah Project Chapters had at most heard my name in passing, or have no idea who I am at all, as the group (as I have noted) is a decentralized, autonomous organization, that is less a group and more an affiliation with ideas.

If the researcher directly influenced the actions of participants being interviewed, then this would in fact create tension in terms of a researcher creating their own data. That is not the case here, nor is it really possible within the framework of the Hashlamah Project organizationally. The strongest point of this study's participatory action research is in fact that I am a member of the group. The future is as much my concern as theirs. This puts me in a double position as researcher and group member.

Regarding the project and its aftermath, it is important to reflect on the ways in which, activism can become a tinderbox for all kinds of horrific possibilities. This has become of particular concern to me as I have noted earlier, in the Era of Trump and with the rise in hate crimes against both Jews and Muslims since the 2016 Electoral College victory of Donald J. Trump (Cohen, 2018; Goodstein, 2018).

Bias-Checking and Tongue-Biting

Doing the interviews seemed like a straightforward enough process, until I actually began conducting them. Though I pride myself on bias-checking in research or journalism, and holding my research, particularly when it comes to historiography, up to the rigorous criteria of critical

methodologies for discerning probable historicity, I found staying with nonjudgmental listening to be a psychological battle within me during the interview process. That is, it happened more than occasionally that participants said things I recognized as historically inaccurate or at least questionable, from my own past research. This was not, however, a history paper. This was a process of sitting down and interviewing the participants, anthropologically as it were. There was no room in the interview process for what I “knew” to be correct. I could not interrupt and correct or clarify, or in so doing, I would have altered how the participants engaged with me.

Throughout the interviewing process, I had to “bite my tongue” a great deal more than I thought I would have to when I disagreed with interpretations the participants gave. The opposite was true as well. In some cases, it was not disagreeing that I had to refrain from, but agreement, elaboration and even suggestions that I felt the inclination to interject. I am very used to conversational dialogue groups. This was an interview, however, not a dialogue, and accordingly, to the best of my memory, I refrained from interjections of any sort. As noted early on in this study, the first rule in interpretive analysis is to respect the experience and the time people give you. When it became difficult in the heat of the interview or in writing to dispassionately report and record what was said, I decided to make notes of my thoughts and reserve commentary for this concluding chapter. This moment has now arrived.

One area that caused personal discomfort, as a primarily Ashkenazi Jew in the United States—particularly in recent years with the exponential increase in anti-Semitic¹⁹ attacks,

¹⁹ The root word *Semite* gives the false impression that anti-Semitism is directed against all Semitic people, including Arabs and Assyrians. Conversely, the compound word anti-Semite was popularized in Germany in 1879 as a scientific-sounding term for *Judenhass* (“Jew-hatred”) and this has been its common use since then. The origin of “anti-Semitic” terminologies is found in the responses of Moritz Steinschneider to the views of Ernest Renan, noted in Bein (1990) who explained that “the compound anti-Semitism appears to have been used first by Steinschneider, who challenged Renan on account of his anti-Semitic prejudices (A. Falk, 2008), meaning his derogation of the “Semites” as a race synonymous with Jews. Treitschke uses the term “Semitic” completely synonymously with “Jewish”, and never in

hate-crimes, and terrorism was the use of the phrase “Jewish Privilege”; this came up in the interviews with TA2.MJI, J3.MJI, and TA5.FJI. I very much accept that in relation to some oppressed groups, there is Jewish privilege, particularly in Israel and the West Bank. At the same time, when we have to go to Shabbat services with armed guards at the door, in the wake of Trump Era anti-Semitic attacks, it is hard to acknowledge the legitimacy of such a phrase, as doing so feels like willfully ignoring the historical experience Jewish people have always faced in the United States. As I write the first draft of this concluding chapter in December of 2018, the Alt-Right is reframing the phrase, “Happy Chanukah,” as an anti-Semitic dog whistle response to anything they deem part of an international George Soros-funded, Jewish conspiracy (Clover Chronicle, 2018).

These views are becoming mainstream in the United States. In Israel, the phrase “Jewish privilege” is as accurate as it is logical. Outside of Israel, however, it is more complicated. I feel that there is a real danger of falling into the trap of diminishing the historical and, once again, reviving aggression and oppression of the Jewish people in traditionally Christian-dominated Western nations. In Los Angeles, Jewish congregants leaving Shabbat services faced a terrorist attack by a Muslim man. This individual was not Palestinian. He was, in sociological terms, never oppressed by any Jews, but because of the demonization of Jews that has existed in Wahhabi and Neo-Salafi circles since well before the establishment of the State of Israel, he viewed Jews as *kuffar* (infidels) and thus as legitimate targets for violence. He appropriated the Palestinian cause and used it as a weapon of his heterodox sect. The complete lack of sincerity in fundamentalist attestations of support for the Palestinian people—and evidence for the

reference to Arabs, which, by contrast, in Germany, anti-Semitism had a much more complicated relationship with. As such, given its historical and contemporary normative usage, “anti-Semitism” will be referenced herein synonymously with “Jew-hatred.”

appropriation of their struggle to legitimize pre-existing Islamicate (like that of Western) anti-Semitism—is found in the oppressive attitudes, dehumanization, and deprivation of rights Palestinian refugees face in fundamentalist-controlled states, which are indifferent, at best, to the Palestinian people, when outside of the borders of Israel or Palestine (Chew, 2010).

The irony is that *kafir* is a term and concept that is Jewish in origin. A *kofer ba'Torah* is Talmudically, one who “covers over” the truth of the Torah, while knowing consciously that it is the truth. Four years ago, the phrase, Jewish privilege, would not have made me uncomfortable. But a lot has changed between now and then, since the rise of Trump and the Alt-Right, and it has only worsened in the months since this concluding chapter was composed and then, revised as I moved forward to my dissertation defense.

On the opposite end of the spectrum were Gush Etzion settler views expressed in the course of the interviews. While I absolutely acknowledge the historical background they gave to the settlement, it is still problematic on many levels. Not only was there no reference to the role even historically legitimate settlements play in the Occupation of the West Bank, they seemed to soften the reality of extreme right-wing Zionism, by focusing on the “good Zionist” anecdotal ideal. While it is clear that the term “Zionism” is used as an anti-Semitic dog-whistle by the Alt-Right, Neo-Nazis, Neo-Salafi “Wahhabis,” and many other groups and individuals, it does not change the fact that Zionism *is* nationalism, and that ethno-nationalism should not be white-washed. Still, they are correct about the fact that there are some good people who self-identify as Zionists. Many view “Zionism” less as nationalism and more as “patriotism.” I am personally a “Practical Anarchist”—meaning, as I have noted, one who realizes some semblance of government is necessary at this stage of human evolution, but that anarchistic

communities²⁰ should be strived for wherever possible and focused on as the ideal of sorts for society. As such, from my personal perspective, I have little tolerance for *any* form of nationalism, including “patriotism.” When a nation does good, I support their actions. When they do bad, I do not. I have no loyalty to a nation because of which nation it happens to be, nor because of which people it might claim to represent. For me, the overlap of Zionism and “patriotism,” with the justifications for the Gush Etzion settlement, was significant.

Racialized Assumptions

In the study interviews there were some quite racialized assumptions that, consciously or not, play into some of the fears, particularly from TA3.FJI, yet cannot be categorized as “risks” or “threats” in any way. Statements of a fear implying that *any* Arab Muslim can just attack a Jewish participant on the street at any time, are clearly racist in nature. It did, however, seem clear to me that the interviewee was acknowledging this, though this might not have been as perceptible in print as it was conversationally, or to one reading the full transcripts of the interview in its entirety. Similarly, fears stemming from people looking as though they are Muslim, or fear of inviting Palestinian Arabs or Muslims to join a chapter were also related racist fears, expressed in the interviews, but ones that those expressing them seemed to me to be reflecting on from something of an ideological rear view mirror. They very much seemed to know that acknowledging their racist conditioning was part of their personal journey, growth and evolution as activists and human being. She was further acknowledging this with some sense of pride, almost (in the case of TA3.FJI) seeming to want to highlight how far she has come in her shedding of those views she was describing—whether in general, or just since my earlier pilot study with them.

²⁰ With a focus on Deep Ecology, retention of primitive skills, and sustainability rather than the centrality of industry under traditionally normative modes of socialism.

While it is perhaps premature to call her “reformed,” it is still a promising sentiment lost in transcription, that she was looking back at these former views as something she no longer holds to, but which are still part of her journey and evolution through participation in her chapter’s study circle. While these sorts of fears must be clearly distinguished from the other fears or credible treats, these are nevertheless cultural fears that must be confronted and faced in this conflict specifically, even if we as scholars and as activists can look at them as irrational and bigoted in nature. The interviewee TA3.FJI has clarified that they “agree entirely” with this assessment and says in the interview, “all I can do is ask ‘why do I feel fear?’ Maybe the reason is good. *Maybe it is ridiculous*. I don’t ignore the fear, I question it and rationally engage it. This process itself sifts *real from perceived threats* and allows me to cope with the perceived ones, while avoiding the real ones”—noting here that her racist indoctrination led to “ridiculous” fears that were all imagined and not real threats at all.

Nonbinary Conflict

While there is a common misconception of widespread, historical animosity between Jews and Muslims, that does not make it factual or real for *everybody* today nor in the past. Still, understanding why *some* people feel this way, and what historical incidences their overly-generalized fears emanate from, is an important part of the dialog that occurs in Hashlamah Project Study Circles, as is separating what is historically-based from what is something of a cultural fear borne of recent incidences, conflicts and politics.

There have been phenomenal periods of coexistence and co-worship between Jews and Muslims. Most Muslims and Jews historically got along very well, in most periods and regions. This was true of the common man and woman, but it was not always the case in terms of government policies. For instance, while there was the beauty of the Jewish Renaissance of

Muslim-ruled Andalusia (7th to 12th century CE), there was also the tragedy of the expulsion of Jews by the Muwahhadi (Al-Muhad) Caliphate (c. 1121–1269 CE) from the same region. While it was not common to all Muslims, discriminatory regulations were put in place in some regions, with the clear objective of humiliating Jewish residents.²¹ Things have never been black and white in the relationship between Jewish and Muslim communities.

Perhaps the most influential historical myth that has lent to cultural fears of Muslims in Israeli culture is the legendary massacre of the Banu Qurayzah tribe. Hadith literature describing this genocide against Jewish tribes in Ibn Ishaq's²² *Sirah* account, are of course completely debunkable from a historical-critical perspective—and I have done so at length in *Unraveling the Myth of the Banu Qurayzah: The Origins of Islamicate Genocide* (David, 2011). Jewish historical sources from the first *Hijrah* century after Muhammad make it clear that the Arab conquest over the Christian-controlled Levant was hailed by Jewish sources as intervention, by God on behalf of “His People,” and thus “as an event full of promise for the future.” Contemporary Palestinian Jews spoke appreciatively of the coming of the third Sunni

²¹ It will suffice, however, to highlight the Allahdad massacre of 1839 in Meshhad. The dismal picture of the severe limitations imposed on Jewish residents, clearly, as the renowned ethnographer of Near Eastern cultures and ethno-religious groups, Raphael Patai writes in his *Jadid Al-Islam*, “with the avowed purpose of humiliating them” is found in two surviving lists of prohibitions, one before the Allahdad and one three decades after it, including regulations that a Jew is to be punished by death if he aids another Jew being beaten by a Muslim, and that any Jew “must wear a badge on his coat, and his garb must be different from that of a Muslim.” Jews were also banned from owning weapons, and in the second decree in 1870, by Muhammad `Abdullah, we are told that Jews must step to the side of the road to “let a Muslim pass” and that “a Jew must not raise his voice when speaking to a Muslim.” We read Jews must not even “wear a matching pair of shoes” and that “he must listen to insults by a Muslim with a lowered head and without opening his mouth.” Jews “must not dwell in a beautiful house” and the “door of his house must be low.” The Jew “must not take walks outside the city” and “is not allowed to ride a horse” and may “not eat fruits, except rotten ones.” These were not merely products of the 19th Century in Iran but dated back, easily to the restrictions contained in *Jami'-i `Abbasi* (The `Abbasian Collector), Muhammad al-Amili's (1547–1621). popular repertory of Shi'i law, as it had been codified formally by the time of Shah Abbas I (1571–1629).

²² Ibn Ishaq (d. 767 or 761 CE), Date of birth for this figure is unknown, as his date of death is discrepantly attested. He was, however, a contemporary of Malik ibn Anas, and their disputes were widely reported.

Caliph (c. 584–644 CE) `Umar *al-Faruq* (“The Redeemer”), with no apprehension whatsoever. A contemporary account attributed to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, describes `Umar as “a lover of Israel who repaired their breaches,” going on to insist that “The Holy One is only bringing the Kingdom of Ishmael in order to save you from this wickedness [of Christian oppression]” (Baron, 1952, p. 93) further describing the emergence of the Islamic forces as “an act of God’s mercy” (Goitein, 1955, p. 63).

Nevertheless, amongst the *`ulema* (clerics) of both Sunni and Shi`i schools of Islam, the legend of the genocide against the Banu Qurayzhah is thought and taught to be historically accurate. Far from these being archaic and esoteric tales, Ben-Tvi (1884–1963), the second President of Israel, wrote a book about *Mizrachi* Jewish communities in the Middle East, entitled *The Exiled and the Redeemed* (Ben-Tvi, 1957) with an entire section on the myth of the Banu Qurayzhah. Ben-Tvi was not alone. Knowledge of these traditions is common in Israeli politics and academia.

This ties into the interviews with both TA3.FJI and TA4.MDI in a very important way. Israelis, particularly those with *Mizrachi* parents or grandparents, have cultural memory much the same as Druze Arabs have, and have in some cases reacted in a similar way of thinking this is now their time to “pay back” their Muslim neighbors. Understanding this historical backdrop of grey areas and nuance is key to understanding fears—often, no doubt, racist fears—of many in the general Israeli population towards Muslims and Arabs, as the vast majority of today’s Israeli Jewish citizenry has at least one *Mizrachi* grandparent who fled expulsion, or pogroms, such as with Yemeni Jews or Iraqi Jews fleeing the 1941 Farhud pogrom (Yehuda & Moreh, 2010) of 1941, funded by the Nazi Reich, by proxy of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al-Husseini’s brother (Wien, 2014).

It is as important to note the points of historical harmony between Jewish and Muslim communities as it is to note disharmony, so that the “Israeli Mind,” as it were, can be understood—particularly by those outside of Israeli and Jewish circles who wish to see and effect change related to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Israel is, in my assessment, a “PTSD Culture” and that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is not merely borne of European antisemitism, it is also rooted in historical injustices, pogroms, and bigoted attitudes and religious myths about Jews in predominantly Muslim lands. Part of the work of the Hashlamah Project is in fact helping Israelis work through this cultural “PTSD” and separate *real* threats from *imagined* ones.

Closer to home, my tongue-biting intensified in a Yellow Springs participant’s attempt to justify an apparent growing antipathy towards Muslims and the Palestinian cause. I experienced that not only as inappropriate, but also as offensive. The points YS1.MJ made were valid points, and as noted, historically accurate. To use this, however, in self-justifying an obvious personal shift, more to the right was difficult to listen to without responding. Nevertheless, commentary on this matter was withheld until now.

In the end, activism should not be focused on as a means to a quick or immediate end. Lasting changes occur incrementally and are driven by persistence of activists and minority groups asserting themselves and their agendas. The Taoist maxim that the “destination is the journey” applies here. Persistence is the goal, but it is also the means of change. Burn out occurs when the activist or revolutionary is disheartened in one way or another and sees no essential point to continuing to fight on. But the process of fighting on is what creates the change, slowly at first and then all at once (as we will see).

This process of persistent minority influence can focus the individual, letting them know that there is no goal they have to reach, no mile marker for social progress and change, besides perseverance. The journey *is* the goal. By continuing the journey, persistence is shown and societal change will eventually be catalyzed by this in the same manner that dough is transformed by the mere presence of yeast within it in a heated environment. Most activists do not realize this. Take for example the Ten Point plan of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense; none of those points were realized. Many members became disheartened, with one of the founders even turning to drug abuse which cost him his life, in an apparent drug-deal gone bad (Stein & Basheda, 1989). But the changes a group makes are not necessarily changes they articulate in enumeration or delineation. The significant changes may not be ones that have been formally stated, or might be peripheral changes, not those at the forefront of a group's intentions. Instead, their very persistence in a contrary majority population eventually turns the tide and changes that society. When this is emphasized, imparted and understood, focus can be renewed and persistence can be realized.

Moving Forward as Persistent Minority Influence and Ending Dominant Minority Rule

What does this study say about the future of work as is undertaken by the Hashlamah Project Chapters, and similar organizations, given these findings? It informs us not only that persistence can be achieved, as most participants interviewed agree that backing off is not an option. Instead, they are employing methods to find ways to persist, realizing that persistence is absolutely essential to all change in society, as we will see, the research on what is termed "minority influence" (to be discussed in the sections that follow) indicates that change is persistence-driven. The findings of this study answer the overarching question of "how sustainable is social justice activism in the Israel-Palestine conflict(s) in the face of threats activists face?" and include significant practical information on real-world solutions that have

organically emerged as coping strategies, across multiple Chapters, with very different demographics. These include examples such as the headings delineated in Chapter IV. This included the *Personal Psychological* theme of *hiding views* judiciously, *using pseudonyms*, as well as *self-care*. Some activists have found *meditation* and *yoga* to be useful psycho-spiritual tools in adapting and evolving with the reality of the threats we face, as J3.MJI said, to “remind myself of what is real,” thereby renewing focus on what we are actually engaged in activism for in the first place.

Renewing Focus can often times be driven by a life-long spiritual focus, as TA5.FJI explained it, the Sufi concept of *jihad* of the heart, or as J3.MJI mystically opined,

Fear is not real, it is imagined. All of it is imagined. Even if you die, that is imagined. All of this is a dream and *Ha'Shem* is the Dreamer. What matters is doing what *Ha'Shem* wants, because we are thoughts within His mind. And *Ha'Shem* tells us in the Torah that He wants us to do ‘Justice’ if we live in this Holy Land. That is my only concern: to do justice and let the proverbial chips fall where they may, [this] will sustain for as long as I live—because it is the right thing to do.

His view was that death itself need not be feared, because of either normative Abrahamic views of the afterlife, or more esoteric concepts such as the Jewish Kabbalistic and Druze view on *tanasukh*, or reincarnation (Hebrew: *Gilgulei ha'Neshamot*). The interview with Rabbi YS4.MJ revealed similar views of divine providence behind the consequences faced for his activism. He stated,

I will take it as a blessing. The audience I have today is more open to these ideas than the last one, so perhaps God was trying to move me from a congregation of closed hearts to one with more open ones.

Additional strategies strategy for perseverance and reasons for resilience, include a focus on *intersectionality*; *religious-centered motivation for social justice*; focusing on the sustainability of activism because it is the right thing to do and because it becomes one’s way of life—all these renew focus with *living together as neighbors* as an end goal.

With regards to the topic of *taqiyyah* (which means prudent diplomatic presentation or concealing of beliefs), which permeated essentially all of the interviews, it became clear that sometimes the threats one faces can be so real that they require completely or partially *hiding* views on religion, or the reality of one's ethnicity, heritage, or religious community, a concept coined in Shi'ism, and subsequently the Druze faith, as diplomatic *taqiyyah*. Some activists, for example, J8.MJI said that their solutions include being "discrete about who I talk to about my views." In Yellow Springs, YS3.MM added that, "all I can do is be low key and do my thing." TA1.MJI said that "all that I can do is try to be discrete and compartmentalize my activism from my daily life."

Under Interpersonal Community or Group Solutions and Preparedness, the data suggested an emphasis on *empathy; support from "Other" side; considering perspective of "other" side* as well as *empathy with other groups through sharing and mutual recognition of dignity*. In practice, some of the current working solutions participants interviewed found, included using the *buddy system at protests* and *Jews "insulating with privilege"* and more diverse cross-section of people working directly in the West Bank, as well as activists going to protests and activist events as a group.

Tied in with this empathy and apprehension of the oppression of others, is an awareness of risk and privilege. All of these lead to an understanding and perspective emerging in activist participants consistently (it would seem from the interviews), of unity against threats and the need to provide mutual support and recognize the dignity of others. Every Palestinian participant agreed that there is a serious need for more Jews speaking out. Both in coping with threat through insulation, and empathy-building. There was a call for greater involvement of Ashkenazi Jews, in particular, as their privilege can add a level of security for Palestinians in the Levant,

though this is far from the case in the United States. There was a desire among Jewish participants for more religious Jews to get involved and to use their weight in the community to share the history of Jewish and Muslim interaction, co-worship and cross-pollination with that community. There was a desire among all for Jews and Muslims to work together for solid planning and organizing of larger events or intimate gatherings, especially new ones in the West Bank. There was a call for going in groups to difficult areas for activism and protesting, and thus of more Jews confronting their fears in order to participate in activities in West Bank. For the participants interviewed, this meant a more diverse cross section of people in the West Bank. Finally, there was the desire to see more collaboration with other activist and social justice groups.

Looking at the findings, it is clear that the interviews indicated wide support for the underlying ideas of the Hashlamah Project, which literally grew out of the first residency in my doctoral program in the summer of 2012. Many of the suggestions given were ones that were informally our own approach in the Yellow Springs, founding Chapter. This study, however, substantiates that intuition—borne, no doubt, of decades in activism and working in revolutionary groups. Furthermore, it gives concrete examples of what has worked.

Education and outreach solutions included a unanimous agreement with the Hashlamah Project's principle of holding face-to-face discussion to personalize all interactions. This also includes utilizing group research on *relevant historical seminars on Jewish-Sufi history and Islamic origins in Arabian Jewish sectarian milieu of Late Antiquity*, and emphasizing an *understanding of the principles of Hashlamah*, through *group-specific outreach and support*. Finally, it included the unanimously agreed upon concept of forming and maintaining *support systems for incidences of job loss; psychological support systems within group; and financial or*

housing support. Finally, the solution of physical training, namely in *Martial Arts and Self-defense*, as well as planning for worse-case operational security scenarios, emerged across Chapters. The aim of persistence and thus these coping strategies by activists, is to achieve what is termed minority influence in the literature, or what I, in light of this research, am rephrasing as *Persistent Minority Influence*. More about this will be discussed below.

In many parts of the world, powerful minorities can become brutally dominant. Examples abound—the Shi`ah Alawites of the Assad family, in Syria; the *Muhajirun* in Pakistan; North Yemeni Arabs in Yemen, who are dominating *Zaydi* “Fiver” Shi`ah, with the help of the Sa`udi Kingdom, and U.S. weapons, or Sunni Muslims in predominantly *Ithna Ashari* Shi`i Bahrain; or, an even more widely-known example, the Tutsi in Rwanda during the infamous massacres of 1994. The most prominent historical example is likely that of South Africa during the apartheid regime, to which the State of Israel have been more or less fairly compared to (R. Falk & Tilley, 2017). White South Africans, at the heart of which were Afrikaners, were predominantly in control of the country, even though they never comprised much more than one-fifth of the total population. While the demographics are not parallel between South Africa and Israel-Palestine, the general comparison of apartheid government behavior are. Still, majority or minority, the research on the sort of socio-political change we are discussing suggests that persistence is what matters, not numbers.

When an individual or a group acts as an agent of social change by questioning established societal perceptions and proposing alternative, original ideas which oppose the existing social norms, this can influence the majority to incrementally accept the minority’s beliefs or behavior (Gardikiotis, 2011). The example of South Africa illustrated the essential need of persistence in opposing the dominant group. While indigenous Africans were the

majority in this case, those such as the African National Congress (ANC)—pushing for change—were not. By imposing conformity on the minority, the dominant group pushes social conformity and cultural obedience. Persistent minority influence is the push-back from a minority or dominated group, in order to convert the dominant influence to adopt the thinking of the minority or subjugated group (Sampson, 1991). This is consistent with Hashlamah principles of dialogue, conversation, reaching out, and persuasion, rather than force, violence or coercion. There are numerous examples of positive change in society that came from those who did not represent the dominant group, but the marginalized (or dominated) segments of society; new ideas and resulting change typically come from persistent minority influence. Examples are numerous: from the Civil Rights movement, to Women’s Suffrage, to ending Apartheid in South Africa—ideas that were initiated from a minority of critical people that in the end gained support broad and substantial enough to effect change. By persistently pushing a consistent minority view, this can create an incremental shift in public opinion to agree with the minority group (Van Avermaet, 1996).

Eventually, once a minority has effectively created widespread social change in society, the new perspective becomes a fundamental part of the dominant paradigm. The minority influence is often forgotten in what has been termed “social cryptoamnesia” (Perez, Papastamou, & Mugny, 1995, p. 707). Perez et al. explained that the process of dissociation between the socio-cognitive activities of resistance that are induced by the source and other activities of resistance that develop from the content of the message is this phenomenon of social cryptoamnesia. In short, this is the process of forgetting that majority views were once minority views. In the end, this process occurs and broader society forgets that the individual minority forces that persevered to create this “new normal.” The effect of change itself, however, was and

is the goal of the minority movement, and as such, lasting societal credit or acknowledgement for creating the change is—or should be—unimportant to the activist or revolutionary.

When this occurs, what was originally thought of as different is gradually constructed as an alternative. Although minority influence may not affect a person immediately, one's beliefs and behaviors may change over time due to this process of social cryptoamnesia. This has been the continued approach and results of Hashlamah Project meetings and dialogue groups. While this does not itself create sustainability in the activist, it is the outcome of sustainability and persistence itself and with this knowledge, the struggling activist or revolutionary can be motivated to persevere, by realizing that in their perseverance itself, the battle will ultimately be won, and *is* being won, moment by moment.

In contrast to the popular belief that it is too difficult for a disempowered minority group to change the majority, Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969) offered the perspective that it is possible for a minority or marginalized influence, in particular through informal networking and other strategies, to overcome more powerful and dominant influences, with unwavering persistence. Moscovici and Zavalloni's relevance for the Hashlamah Project is the idea of informal influence (in contrast with dominant formal influence), plus persistence in trying to increase support for oppositional ideas emerging from a dominated, minority or marginalized group. Moscovici and Zavalloni described this as *informal influence*, coupled with persistence in trying to increase support for oppositional ideas emerging from a dominated, minority or marginalized group. The Hashlamah Project model follows this in giving equal voice and weight to all participant perspectives and allowing a space and empowerment for marginalized groups to no longer be forced into relative silence.

Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969) conducted a study on minority influence to see if a group of four participants were influenced by a minority. Their research was important as one of the first studies to show that a minority was able to change the opinions of the majority. The research opened the door to more research on the subject. This was called *conversion theory*, and it outlines a dual process of social influence (Moscovici, Mugny, & Van Avermaet, 1985): when an individual's views differ from the majority, this causes inner turmoil, motivating the individual to reduce conflict by using a comparison process, leading to compliance and public acceptance of the majority position to avoid ostracism and potential ridicule (Crano & Seyranian, 2007). In this way, majority or dominant influence is seen as normative social influence because often it is generated by a desire to fit in and conform to the group. Conversely, a minority or marginalized view is more distinctive, gradually capturing attention, and resulting in a validation process, where a certain percentage of people carefully analyze the discrepancy between their own view and the minority view. The majority, however, tend to listen to what fits with their preexisting beliefs and biases, but in time, the minority influence chips away more and more. This can result in attitude conversion, where the individual from the majority side, is convinced that the minority view is correct, which is much more likely to be private rather than public. This, of course, does not account for influence on all of the population in any single, given time frame, as there are many who cannot be swayed by rational argumentation when they are not emotionally ready to handle change.

It is key to understand that minority influence can almost never sway others through normative social influence. That is because the majority is indifferent to the minority's perspective of them. To influence the majority, the minority group would take the approach of informational social influence (W. Wood, Lundgren, Ouellette, Busceme, &

Blackstone, 1994). By presenting information that the majority does not know or expect, the information catches the attention of the majority to carefully consider and examine the minority's view. After consideration, when the majority finds more validity and merit in the minority's view, the majority group has a higher chance of accepting part or all of the minority opinion. Sometimes this happens through the gradual sway of ideas or, at other times, as the result of international pressure, boycotts, and the social unsustainability of protests against the status quo. The fall of apartheid was mostly the result of international pressure, boycotts, unsustainability of protest in South Africa, rather than a substantial change of heart among Afrikaners. Still, this became part of the process for some when political and legal democracy had become a fact, and the inevitability of persistence from the minority influence, was internalized and succumbed to.

The work of the Hashlamah Project aims to be a demonstration of this social theory, as it has never had one decisive period of drastic influence over the masses, but instead has slowly spread ideas throughout Israeli society (along with other groups of similar aims and purposes). This was seen from J3.MJI, who stated that “the change we are seeing is gradual. It isn't something you notice overnight or after one meeting or study circle . . . over enough time, you really begin to notice the views and politics of people shift.”

The most obvious case that I have observed from the group's inception and activity in Israel has been with the gradual shifting in public discourse on ideas such as the promotion of a single-state Federation of Gaza-Israel-West Bank Palestine, with equal rights, unique statehood, yet federated citizenship and rights of travel and return for those residing therein already, or Diaspora communities. In Tel Aviv, TA2.MJI male Israeli citizen, said that his own views have shifted from a Two State proposal towards “proposals . . . from the Hashlamah Project on

federalizing multiple states under one state” and promoting that approach as a solution. He argued,

It is a hard thing to get people to agree with at first, but once they see how it is all explained, and how each problem they have with it is answered, then their minds gradually begin to open to it.

While many of the Hashlamah Projects ideas have been too far out of the norm for widespread acceptance, this basic, political proposition has gradually taken hold when previously the discussion whether in Israel or Palestine was almost exclusively restricted to that of a two-state solution that created far more problems and complications than it seemed to solve.

This sort of approach to subtle influence of the group was not happenstance but was instead part of the founding aims of the organization, rooted in my own influence and background in Taoism. In the 17th verse of the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu famously writes that the “*Zhen Ren*”—a nuanced term in Classical Taoism that is summarized in translation as the “Master”—works from the shadows to influence the masses, describing the persistent minority influence of a small number of masters of the Tao (Chinese for the “intrinsic way” or “natural order”) on human society, working from behind the scenes and deliberately foregoing notoriety or acknowledgement for their catalyzing role in social change. In the popular consciousness, they are the actual agents of societal change

When the Master governs,
The people are hardly aware that he exists . . .
The Master doesn’t talk, he acts.
When his work is done,
the people say, “Amazing:
we did it, all by ourselves!”²³

²³ Laozi, Translated by Chen Guying, originally from Arthur Waley (1934).

Israel witnesses persistent minority influence in the increased discussion of a single Federal State Solution more and more since the inception of groups like and including the Hashlamah Project chapters, which have actively and vocally promoted the idea in face-to-face dialogues, long before most others were. When the chapters began, this view was essentially unheard of in popular Israeli discourse, let alone amongst American Jewry. Now it is being widely proposed, discussed and debated (e.g., Cobban, 2019; Holmes, 2019; Munayer, 2019; Shupak, 2018).

Aly (2019), published “The Case for the One-State Solution,” in the journal, *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*. He explained that the popularity of the One-State Solution has resurfaced after years of obscurity and rejection. He noted that one of the earliest of such proposals was espoused by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) “in its original charter in 1964, which called for the establishment of a single, democratic, and secular state for Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike” (para. 5). In the past few years, according to Aly, the idea has been gaining sway particularly amongst Jews in Israel and abroad. He explained, “On March 1, 2018, the One State Foundation was launched, a Palestinian-Israeli initiative with an agenda to broaden debate and ultimately gain support for a one-state solution” (Aly, 2019, para. 6).

In the United States, a poll from the University of Maryland recently documented that American Jews also are increasingly supportive of a one-state solution in Israel. Telhami (2018) studied attitudes about the conflicts in the Middle East for more than 30 years. He says that in those 30 years, the One State Solution has gone from the fringe to a serious contender among proposed solutions since 2018.

We have seen this same persistent minority influence on the Far Left in the United States. Various militant antifascist and feminist protests that I organized and was the viral face²⁴ of, were seen as anathema to much of the normative centrist liberal attitudes at the time. Persisting, as I and a few key members of the Hashlamah Project, the White Rose Society/White Rose Revolt, and other related groups here did, in time, we saw these protests influence and spawn incredibly widespread networks on the Left that are in the headlines today—whether the John Brown Militia, or the reformed Redneck Revolt, and Socialist Rifle Association. To the outsider, these groups seem unrelated, independent and spontaneous.

Moscovici and Nemeth (1974) argued that a minority, consistent with the *Tao Te Ching*'s example, is more influential than a larger group. This is because one person is more likely to be consistent over long periods of time and will not divide the majority's attention. Persistence, however, is essential. Inconsistent persistence will do little or nothing. Minority influence is more likely to occur if the point of view of the minority is consistent as well as flexible, yet unwavering in opinion. Any wavering opinions from the minority group, however, can quickly lead the majority to dismiss the minority's claims and opinions (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2007).

²⁴ Starting with the militant, armed protests of the Beavercreek Police Department and Walmart, following the killing of John Crawford III, in 2014, and then continuing on with years of monthly protests at both the BCPD and Walmart, as well as armed protests at the home of Stanford rapist, Brock Turner, the centrist liberals of areas such as Yellow Springs, Ohio were horrified, by and large. Self-described "Communists" denounced the use of firearms in protests, and large debates ensued, where I argued the perspective of Marx, Lenin and others regarding the necessity of an armed proletariat even after a successful revolution. Slowly, an offshoot group of the White Rose Society, that I rebooted in 2016 gave birth to the John Brown Militia, and various other organizations that were related and rebooted in association like Redneck Revolt and the Socialist Rifle Association. By 2018 these ideas went from outright rejection in leftist circles, to popular acceptance. In 2018 the same village of Yellow Springs that was horrified at such a militant approach now had dozens of Antioch College students taking martial arts lessons from me and privately training in firearms tactics, marksmanship and weapons retentions and disarms. Today, social media is filled with commonplace leftist references to armed revolution, and opposition to such is more the exception than the rule now.

Moscovici and Nemeth (1974) explained that with enough persistence, the minority causes the populace to wonder, “how can they be so wrong and yet so sure of themselves?” This results in a tendency to reevaluate the entire situation, and to weigh alternatives, including the minority view. Multiple people are more likely to be influential than one person as they are less likely to be seen as strange, eclectic or eccentric. Recent research has suggested that if consistent, persistent minority influence has more credibility and is therefore more likely to influence the majority (Arbuthnot & Wayner, 1982).

If this consistency is lost, then the minority loses its credibility. This can be the case if a member of the minority deserts and joins the majority, as this damages the consistency and unity of the minority, making their persistence meaningless in terms of affecting lasting societal change. The downside of trying to stop this is that when the group coerces members to stay, repressing critical views, it loses the power to change. This is how too many revolutions ended in often-violent repression of the population. Nevertheless, the actual process of minority cohesion leading to wide scale influence is a reality, in spite of the ethical concerns associated with the potential for coercion to retain the social influence and power to change. If the cohesion is not maintained, in the end, society often reverses gains, or progress is rebalanced to a Hegelian synthesis point (Breazeale, 1993).

After this occurrence, members of the majority are less likely to shift their position to that of the minority. A prime example of this could be seen in the widespread influence of the early Allah Temple of Islam and Nation of Islam, and how this plateaued after Malcolm X broke with the group and embraced normative views of Islam (Evanzz, 1992).

The most obvious example of consistency over time and agreement among the members of the minority in recent decades has been the persistence of the LGBT movement, which

seemed to make little or no impact for many years, but then began to experience exponential mainstream acceptance. Today it is clear that for the LGBT movement, persistent minority influence has worked (Adam, 1987). It altered the majority attitudes and behaviors—in this case towards the minority.

To this end, moving forward, there is a formulating strategy between Hashlamah Chapter facilitators to include education on persistent minority influence research and scholarship in the work of Hashlamah Project Study Circles. In so doing, we hope to not only motivate and inspire perseverance among activists further but to also reassure members, both new and old, that our relatively small numbers are not to be unexpected, nor should they discourage anyone. This is, simply put, the *way* of things.

Concluding Questions Raised and Answered by the Research

The interviews in this study left me with several questions. The first of these is, “how do the findings answer my research questions?” To reiterate, the primary research question asked in this dissertation is how Jewish-Muslim and Israel-Palestine grassroots activism can persist in the face of threats to the safety, freedom, and lives of those engaged in acts of sustained resistance. These interviews demonstrate an array of solutions that emerge across the boundaries of city, nation, and ethno-religious community. Far from each chapter or individual coming up with completely unheard-of ideas, what I found was a common thread connecting each of the chapters and participants, regardless that they were unaware of how other respondents were answering, or even who else was answering. This demonstrates something of a well-beaten path, treaded by activist after activist. As with most paths of this sort, the fact that they are being repeatedly traveled, demonstrates the efficiency and effectiveness of the route.

The second question that the interviews raised for me, ties in to the first. It is: “what are the differences between the chapters?” As alluded to in the introductions to the interviews and chapters, each of these is a unique chapter, in significant ways distinct from the others. In large part, that is why they were selected, rather than Chapters that might have more in common, like those existing in primarily Muslim lands, which have few if any Jewish participants. The chapters selected had both Jews and Muslims in as nearly equal measure as possible, but the politics, and degree of religious observance varied greatly in each. In Tel Aviv, the participants tended to be much more secular than in the other chapters. In Jerusalem, they were far more religious. In Yellow Springs, everyone kept to their ethno-religious communities in a somewhat “American way,” wherein the identity is important for the individual, regardless of their degree of practice, though practice is embraced and emphasized, in part because it heightens one’s sense of participation in these groups as American minority communities.

The third question that arose for me from the interviews, tied in with the previous two: “Are certain strategies more prominent in different chapters?” The answer was as simple as it was clear: unequivocally, yes. In Tel Aviv a more secular approach, often more political and even bi-nationalistic in nature, seemed to be effective. The focus was more on having communities that are separate work together. In Jerusalem, the religious foundation of many participants’ involvement in the Hashlamah Project, seemed to lead to the chapter collectively tracing inspiration back to historical religious models—not merely of pluralism, but of unity and unification—whether with Judeo-Sufi inspiration or drawing inspiration from the *Constitution of Medina*. The approaches to bridge building were accordingly more religiously driven and colored.

In Yellow Springs, there was what could be considered a more blended approach, with a uniquely American situation of the chapter being immersed in the Era of Trump with its resurgence of fascism and popularist hate and fear. The approaches to bridge-building seemed to draw from individuals situating their perspective within the framework of American politics and a historical backdrop of slavery, genocide, and widespread oppression of minority groups.

Another question arising from the interviews, was “did I see any differences in terms of gender?” The answer again was yes. The female participants tended to draw empathy from their experiences as women; in fact, their resilience in the face of threats due to their activism was tied intersectionally with their resilience as feminists in the face of threats they face as women.

There is also the question: “Did I see any differences in terms of ethno-religious background of members involved?” Again, the answer was yes. The most obvious difference was between Jews and Muslims, but the inclusion of a Druze participant added even more of a diverse array of various political and ethno-religious elements driving participants to engage in this form of activism, as well as their motivations for perseverance. Beyond that, there was a difference in degree of religious observance between chapters. Jews in Tel Aviv tended to be more progressive on most issues than Jews in the Jerusalem Chapter. Muslims appeared more or less consistent across Israeli-Palestinian chapters, but in the United States, there was a tendency for religious observance to be more cultural, with clear weight on various religious elements to one’s identity.

Finally, based on the interviews I asked if there were differences in terms of sustainable potential with respect to different strategies? There were many effective strategies that emerged across chapters. But at their core were two key opposites in approach: confronting fear versus

suppressing it. In the short term, both seemed to provide effective results for the individuals implementing them, but in the long term, the suppression of fear is not sustainable.

For many activists, the solution of confronting fear head on, drew from De Becker's (1998) *The Gift of Fear*, which the Hashlamah Project Chapter recommended for participants to read after my first pilot study in Israel. J2.MMP explained that "the fears will always be there, but they are there anyway. You have to live and do what you set out to do even if there is a risk." J5.FJI asked "what can I do besides continue on? It's either that or resign myself to a life of reluctant servitude." TA3.FJI said: "I neither ignore the fear and charge head in without being alert, nor do I accept the fear." In this way, she said, she thinks her activism can be "very sustainable if I neither allow fears to paralyze me, nor disregard them. The fear itself can be there to keep me safe."

Moving Forward

The question of this dissertation actually contains the solution and conclusion to the study. The primary research question asked in this dissertation was how Jewish-Muslim and Israel-Palestine grassroots activism can persist in the face of threats to the safety, freedom, and lives of those engaged in acts of sustained resistance. Our goal is to change the dominant paradigm and the means by which we will achieve this is persistence itself. As such, the data from the interviews in this study provide solutions that real-world activists and chapters believe are solutions to achieving that persistence in the face of the very threats that would thwart it and thus neutralize change.

Throughout the interview process, the participants were actively engaged in discussions, not simply checking off answers on a survey. This resulted in living experiences and stories shared, that gave real world insights into application, not merely sterile theorizing. While our

discussion of the results did not extend into recommending approaches and behaviors, the participants themselves realized that they could practice shared strategies without my prompting, and by discussion with each other after regrouping from the interviews. In this way, the interviews themselves seemed to not only serve as prompts, but as a catalyst for introspection and both individual and organizational evolution. In the time since these interviews were conducted, the participant chapters have noted that the interview questions are still being referenced from time to time in study circles and private discussions, in connection to realizations that interviewees came to.

Coping mechanisms and strategies for navigating relevant threats can emerge from this study for other organizations facing similar risks, whether relevant to Israel-Palestine issues, or social justice in general. The results of the study, and the strategies that emerge from responses to interview questions, are significant; as stated, the interviews actually seem able to serve as catalysts for activist growth and coping.

Where to Go From Here

After concluding this dissertation my intention is to utilize this study to directly engage Hashlamah Project (and associated Jam`at al-Fitrah) chapters, for whom this work is most obviously relevant. Though I have already shared preliminary drafts of this dissertation with chapter leaders in the respective communities studied, I plan to engage and present these findings more directly, face-to-face, in future seminars in the State of Israel, in the years to come. This engagement with the findings of this study will take the form of expanding the sort of seminars I had previously conducted in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in 2014. As before, I will conduct these seminars both as an activist and as a trainer of activists, as well as for the purposes of further potential research studying the impact of these workshops.

These seminars will expand and focus not only on confronting fears—utilizing this research as the backbone—but will also be conducted on topics on *Navigating and Coping Mechanisms* yielded by the interviews. These results or methods include but are not limited to solutions interviewees spoke of such as further education coded as *relevant historical seminars on Jewish-Sufi history* and *Islamic origins in Arabian Jewish sectarian milieu of Late Antiquity* as well as seminars on *understanding of Hashlamah* and *group-specific outreach and support*. As part of this, I plan to compile writings past, present and future on these subjects, and publish full-length works related to these topics, for the edification of chapter members and interested and relevant parties.

Finally, I will return in the seminars, to the proposals for a *New Constitution* as a working prototype for a blueprint for peace and reconciliation between Jews and Muslims in Israel and Palestine, which had been one of the two primary focuses of the 2014 pilot study and seminars.

Utilizing this study as a foundation, I will give seminars on the reoccurring theme heard by Palestinians about developing a *More Diverse Cross-Section of People Working Directly in The West Bank*, highlighting the importance of Jewish activists stepping up to fight alongside with Palestinian activists—a topic discussed in the interviews as well as in some of the literature and videos surveyed herein. Related to this, I would like to conduct further studies specifically on and with the Israeli Left as well as anarchist perspectives on *questioning of and disbelief in borders*, relative to the No State solution. Related to the topic and strategy of a *more diverse cross-section*, I would like to work with individual activists already engaged in utilizing the *buddy system at protests* and highlight, at instructional workshops on this topic, the importance of Jewish activists “*insulating with privilege*” and *Going to protests and activist events as a group*.

Related to the desire for *martial arts training/self-defense* as well as *Preparedness* and “scenario” training, this study has convinced me to resume the regular martial arts and tactical seminars that I used to conduct throughout the United States with various Hashlamah and Jam`at Al-Fitrah chapters, as well as with other organizations, and to expand these to other relevant and desired parties who request such training. Previously, I had a regular group of activists in different cities who trained with me in self-defense, as well as in meditation seminars which I conducted approximately six times a year. These seminars were, however, paused while I worked on this dissertation over the past few years. The results of this study have highlighted to me the importance of resuming those seminars for the peace of mind of activists and revolutionaries.

Again, I intend for this presentation to be conducted within the borders of Israel (within the Hashlamah Project chapters), as well as Palestinian territories (with the Jam`at Al-Fitrah). My intention is then to extrapolate these findings to related activism abroad (including but not limited to the full array of Hashlamah Project chapters globally), with respect to Jewish-Muslim reconciliatory work.

As both the threats and the methods of coping with them have proven rather universal in nature by different chapters, my final intention is to bring these findings to social justice and reconciliatory organizations abroad and in general, so that the underlying results of the study can be extrapolated and applied to a wider range of activist movements for their edification. In the context of the United States, I would like to study the emergence of a new Jewish Left in the Era of Trump, including the Jewish opposition to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Trump administration’s immigration policies in general. It is my hope that this work can benefit this new generation of Jewish activists emerging in the United States and help them to persevere

for years to come. Ultimately, I hope that a broad spectrum of social justice activist groups find this research to be beneficial to their activism, just as the study circles in the Levant already have, so that together, with these methods of coping with threats to our work, we can better persist as a lasting minority influence for true and lasting change.

Conclusion

The Hashlamah Project participants are exposed to an environment in which they are at risk from threats to their employment, familial stability, safety, or life. While all are on one level or another navigating those fears, they were vulnerable to, there were varying degrees of success but also, seemingly looming burn-out, in some cases. Opponents of such social justice and reconciliation activists and revolutionaries tend to be targeted due to their perceived vulnerability. The support systems and coping mechanisms in place for these participants, however, led to an exhibited confidence. This display of confidence seems to have deterred²⁵ those who would pose threats, in much the same way, as I have suggested, that predators in Nature do not typically attack the perceived strong, but instead the weak, sick, old and otherwise vulnerable.

These challenges have been the same in many other movements—the Civil Rights movement, antiracism, economic justice, environmental justice. Many activists, or what Thalhammer et al. (2007) referred to as “courageous resisters” (p. 21), have been there before the Hashlamah Project and faced the same things. The Hashlamah Project, however, and these participant interviews, can teach others not simply restating the problems being faced, but also what solutions have actually been working across chapters, irrespective of diverse geographical, nationality, and demographic contexts. Existing literature informs of solutions for the risks and

²⁵ This is based on what is, as of yet, anecdotal evidence that the Neo-Nazis and other white nationalist, as well as other terrorists are deterred because of this sort of confidence. Another study, under “Future research,” could be to interview opponents or former opponents of activists in a more formal setting than I have over the past two and a half decades.

fears of high stakes activism, and this dissertation joins that larger body of research, as well as adding new insights to it.

Fear and threats of violence, terrorism, prison or even political assassination are all concerns that come to the forefront of activism that involves Jews and Muslims generally, and Israelis and Palestinians specifically. Such threats can come from actual terrorist groups, and radical religious leaders from either religion; or they can come from the State apparatus itself. Moïsi (2010) investigated the impact of globalization, and how the geopolitics of today are characterized by what he calls a “clash of emotions” (p. 1), rather than as Huntington’s (1996) “clash of civilizations” (his book title). Moïsi argued that the West itself is almost completely consumed and dominated by a sense of division born from fear while in Islamic communities, a sense of hatred is born from humiliation. There is an inextricable link, in the literature, between fear of perceived or real threats, and hatred of those threats stem from. That hatred itself originates from a sense of humiliation, and thus estrangement. The threats faced by participants interviewed here arise in response to their activism aimed at ending that estrangement and humiliation. For there to be a solution to this situation, that sense of humiliation must be confronted and reversed, and empathy for the perceived other must persist and spread.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter for Participants

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Micah [Ben] David Collins [Naziri], the founder of the Hashlamah Project, and a doctoral student with Antioch University.

The Hashlamah Project Foundation was the outgrowth of my doctoral work at Antioch in the Leadership and Change program. The dissertation, *Persistence of Jewish-Muslim Reconciliatory Activism in the Face of Threats and “Terrorism” (Real and Perceived) From All Sides*, will include research from voluntary participants, from the Hashlamah Project chapters that have already agreed to be a part of this research. Throughout the course of my doctoral work, I have focused on social justice and reconciliatory peace work between Israelis and Palestinians specifically, and Jews and Muslims broadly. During the course of my activism and nonprofit work with the Hashlamah Project Foundation, I encountered an array of terroristic threats, which raised the question of how we can persevere with such work in the face of this sort of menacing. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore a spectrum from fear borne of generalizations, prejudices and low threat familial and social ostracism, to full-blown threats against one’s personal safety, family or individual lives and how we can continue on as activists in the face of these.

I am requesting the voluntary assistance of willing participants in the relevant Hashlamah Project study circles/chapters, in order to gather data on threats faced, and how they are and could be confronted.

Participation will take no more than a combined 5 hours in addition to normal participation you are already engaged in within the study circles. You will be asked to share experiences that you feel comfortable talking about, relevant to the dissertation question, and to fill out a short questionnaire. You are not required to participate in this and can simply say that you are not interested. If at any time you change your mind about participation, you can opt out.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: PERSISTENCE OF JEWISH-MUSLIM RECONCILIATORY ACTIVISM IN THE FACE OF THREATS AND “TERRORISM” (REAL AND PERCEIVED) FROM ALL SIDES

Project Investigator: Micah [ben] David Collins [Naziri]

Dissertation Chair: Philomena Essed

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this study is to explore a spectrum from fear borne of generalizations, prejudices and low threat familial and social ostracism, to full-blown threats against one’s personal safety, family or individual lives and how we can continue on as activists in the face of these.

As a participant in the study, I will be asked to share experiences that I feel comfortable talking about, relevant to the dissertation question, and to fill out a short questionnaire.

Participation in the study will take no more than five hours of my time and will take place in my normal Hashlamah Project study circle settings, and during normal meeting times.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are actively engaged in high-risk social justice activism. You should not consider participation in this research if you feel that your activism has not caused serious threats to your life/safety, reputation, employment or familial relations.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. I may refuse to enter it or may withdraw at any time without creating any harmful consequences to myself. I understand also that the investigator may drop me at any time from the study. If an interview has already taken place, the information I provided will not be used in the research study.

Risks

As in all of the research with the Hashlamah Project, there is the potential risk of participants being identified and “outed” for participation, in certain areas of the world. This is less a problem in most Western communities, but some of our chapters have serious concerns about this - often extending to their personal safety. When and where requested, or otherwise deemed necessary, anonymity and/or pseudonyms will mask the identities of participants.

The risks are generally small and easy to mitigate. We have conducted similar research in the past, concealing identities when and where appropriate and necessary (or requested), and the data proved useful regardless of this. Still, if at any point a participant wishes to discontinue involvement in this research, they may opt out.

Benefits

The direct benefit to me in this study is work on my research for my doctoral dissertation.

I understand that this study is of a research nature. It may offer no direct benefit to me. More broadly, the benefits of this study are many, but the most focused, direct and obvious benefit is gauging the interest and response to a proven solution to Jewish and Muslim intra-regional conflict.

- Information about the study was discussed with me by Micah [ben] David Collins [Naziri]. If I have further questions, I can call him/her at 1-[REDACTED]
- Though the purpose of this study is primarily to fulfill my requirement to complete a formal research project as a dissertation at Antioch University, I also intend to include the data and results of the study in future scholarly publications and presentations. Our confidentiality agreement, as articulated above, will be effective in all cases of data sharing”

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any monetary incentive to take part in this research project.

Confidentiality

All information will be de-identified, so that it cannot be connected back to you. Your real name will be replaced with a pseudonym in the write-up of this project, and only the primary researcher will have access to the list connecting your name to the pseudonym. This list will be kept in a secure, locked location.

Limits of Privacy Confidentiality

Generally speaking, I can assure you that I will keep everything you tell me or do for the study private. Yet there are times where I cannot keep things private (confidential). The researcher cannot keep things private (confidential) when:

- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- The researcher finds out that that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else,

There are laws in the United States that require many professionals to take action if they think a person is at risk for self-harm or are self-harming, harming another or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe. In most states, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to self-harm or harm another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that the researcher cannot keep some things private.

Future Publication

The primary researcher, Micah [ben] David Collins [Naziri] reserves the right to include any results of this study in future scholarly presentations and/or publications. All information will be de-identified prior to publication.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Micah [ben] David Collins [Naziri] at telephone # () or via email at .

If you have any ethical concerns about this study, contact Lisa Kreeger, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Antioch University Ph.D. in Leadership and Change, Email: .

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Antioch Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, contact Dr. Lisa Kreeger.

DO YOU WISH TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____
Day/month/year

To be filled out by the researcher or the person taking consent:

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent_____

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____

Date _____
Day/month/year